RULES

of the

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

With

Explanatory Notes

American Edition

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RULES OF THE

SOCIETY OF

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

AND

INDULGENCES

GRANTED BY THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFFS

TO THE MEMBERS AND CERTAIN OF THEIR RELATIVES, AND TO THE BENEFACTORS OF THE SOCIETY AND ITS POOR VISITED BY IT

WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES

From the Manual of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Edition of 1920

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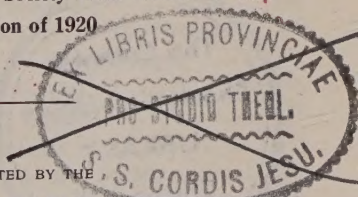

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SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

1924

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INTRODUCTION

TO THE

AMERICAN EDITION OF THE BOOK OF RULES

OF THE

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

IT has been deemed desirable to prepare an introduction to our Book of Rules which would present to our members and to other persons the important facts concerning the organization and development of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, its organization and administration in the United States, and such details concerning the Society as would enable the reader to secure in a brief outline a definite idea of its object, character and methods of procedure.

This introductory article is not intended to eliminate the necessity for a frequent and careful study of our Rules, a duty which is incumbent upon all officers and members, but is offered solely as a means to placing in concise form for ready reference the important details concerning the Society.

Historical

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul had its origin when the first Conference was formed at Paris in the year 1833 by eight young men—not the least remarkable or zealous of whom was Frederic Ozanam—attending the School of Law of the University of Paris. In a debating Society, composed of students, were many atheists, who were bitter and aggressive in their attacks on the Church. They were answered with ability and eloquence by a few practical Catholics among the members. The strength sustained in defense of their faith rapidly developed intimate and friendly relations between these youths, who had not previously known each other.

After one of these debates, Frederic Ozanam, generally accepted as the founder of the Society, said to his companions: "How sad it is to see Catholics, to see our Holy Mother, the Church, thus attacked, ridiculed, and calumniated; let us, of course, remain in the breach and face the attacks, but, do you not feel, like me, a desire of the necessity for having outside this combative Conference, another meeting consisting exclusively of Christian friends and wholly devoted to charity? Does it not seem to be time to *join action to*

words and to affirm by works the vitality of our faith?"

Thus animated, they met together and formed the first Conference, choosing St. Vincent de Paul for their model and patron, and took upon themselves the visitation of the poor in their homes, that great work which has become so essentially characteristic of the Society and by which its members are brought within the reach of priceless lessons of Christian resignation and practical piety. This was the seed from which sprang the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It was organized by young men and for young men. Ozanam was just twenty, the oldest of his companions was under forty and the ages of the other five, from nineteen to twenty-three.

After some time, when their numbers increased to about one hundred, these members of the first Conference divided and formed a second Conference, and eventually a Society was constituted with rules and purposes. Gradually, the Society spread over France, and, in 1836, three years afterwards, it passed the confines of that country and a Conference was established in Rome. Early in 1844, it found its way to England and Ireland.

The first Conference in the United States of America was formed in St. Louis, Mo., in 1845.

This was brought about by Bishop Timon of Buffalo, N. Y., who, on a visit to Europe, had heard of the Society and on his return wrote to some friends in St. Louis, Mo., about it. He established Conferences in Buffalo and in Lockport, and in a letter to the Council General requesting their aggregation to the Society, His Lordship wrote as follows:

Buffalo, N. Y.,
October 8, 1848.

SIR:

Having been charmed on the occasion of my visit to your beautiful country with the good which your Society is doing, I greatly desire to see it flourish in our own country. Some years ago I gave the Rules to some friends in St. Louis where they at once formed a Society. Immediately after my arrival I endeavored to establish it in my Diocese, and since last January it has made splendid progress in two cities: Buffalo, a center of immense immigration and consequently a scene of extreme misery, and Lockport, a city of 10,000 inhabitants. I should have sent this paper earlier, but I waited for Rochester, a city of 40,000 inhabitants, where this same good Society is in progress of being established. However, the great needs of Rochester, where it is necessary in a certain sense to inaugurate all works of religion, have delayed the work there. I ask you humbly to aggregate to your benevolent Society our Association of Buffalo, Erie County, N. Y., and Lockport, Niagara County, N. Y., and I ask you to send me documents, notices of indulgences, and such advice as you judge

useful for the work. With assurance of profound respect and wishes for all happiness in time and eternity,

J. Timon,
Bishop of Buffalo.

Organization and General Administration of the Society

The Council General, located at Paris, France, maintains general jurisdiction over the Society throughout the world. This Council is a self-perpetuating body. Councils and Conferences in all parts of the world report to the Council General, which issues an annual summary of such reports. Once a year the President General presents to the Sovereign Pontiff a report of the Society's work. Conferences and Councils organized in any country as branches of the Society depend for aggregation or affiliation with the Society at large upon the approval of the Council General. Before such application may be made a probationary period of organization is required, usually one year, and the application must show evidence of observance of the Rules of the Society, as well as the performance of a reasonable amount of work in behalf of the poor during the probationary period.

As one object of membership in the Society is the spiritual benefits to be derived from the

many indulgences provided for faithful service, and as these benefits are limited to the members of Conferences, formally aggregated by the Council General, the necessity for such aggregation is obvious.

Subordinate Administration

The subordinate administration of the Society is divided as follows: Superior Councils, Central Councils, Particular Councils, and Conferences.

Superior Councils

The Society in several national divisions is administered under the supervision and direction of a Superior Council. In some countries, however, owing to local conditions, more than one Superior Council exists. The Superior Councils act as Intermediaries between the various divisions of the Society and the Council General. The Superior Council of the United States conducts the general administration of the Society in this country.

Central Councils

Of Central Councils there are two classes: Metropolitan Central Councils, having jurisdiction of the Society in the territory of eccle-

siastical provinces, and Diocesan Central Councils, with jurisdiction over the Society in the specific diocese in which they are organized. The Diocesan Central Councils are subordinate to the respective Metropolitan Central Councils of the provinces in which they are located, if such Councils exist, or, in the event that such Councils are lacking, to the Superior Council.

The functions of the Superior and Central Councils are solely administrative and supervisory in character. They do not engage in or conduct works of charity, leaving those activities entirely to the Conferences and Particular Councils.

Particular Councils

Particular Councils are organized in cities, towns or localities, where three or more Conferences exist, to unite them in one general organization for the supervision of the Conferences and for the effective administration of affairs and work of a general character, attention to which might suffer through lack of funds or personal service if dependent upon the means and efforts of individual Conferences. The membership of Particular Councils is made up of the Presidents and Vice Presidents of Conferences represented, the

Chairman and Vice Chairman of Special Works, and such additional persons as the rules may provide for the membership of the Council.

Many Particular Councils include in their membership the secretaries of Conferences.

Particular Councils are subordinate to Diocesan Central Councils if there be such, if not to the Metropolitan Central Councils or, in the absence of both of the foregoing, to the Superior Council.

Conferences

The Conference is the unit of the organization of the Society. It is based upon parish lines. It usually assumes the parish name for its title and limits its activity to the parish in which it is organized. The pastor or one of his assistants, delegated by him, serves as spiritual director. The Conference is under the jurisdiction of the Particular Council, or in the absence of such Council to the next higher Council in the order hereinbefore named.

Conference Meetings

The Members of the Conference, as each parish organization is called, meet once a week, recite the prescribed prayers, receive the reports of the members upon the condition of

the poor they have assisted during the preceding week and the various charitable enterprises in which they have been engaged, and exchange information and opinions as to such other matters of interest to the organization as may be presented. At these weekly meetings the Conference members carefully consider the needs of each family and sit as a committee of the whole, hearing the reports of the groups of visitors on cases aided, at the same time passing upon the reports of new applications for relief. At such meetings they give special thought and consideration to the different types of cases met with. The Vincentians consider that they owe a duty, not only to the Society, to its benefactors, but also to the applicants for aid, to acquire a thorough knowledge of the latter's needs and circumstances. The benefactors contribute their funds because they have faith in the diligence of the members in applying their donations to the deserving. The families applying for aid are entitled to a fair and considerate hearing of their claim for aid, which, if they are needy, is so indispensable to their material and moral well-being. Relief is allotted to the poor families that have been adopted by the Conference and the same is to be taken to their homes by the members during the ensuing week. The Treas-

urer takes up a collection, to which each member contributes an offering proportionate to his means. This collection is made in such a way that the donation of each member is absolutely secret. No member ever knows what any one of his brother members contributes.

These weekly meetings may vary in length, according to the number of members in the Conference and the extent of its work. They are characterized by few of the formalities that are found in ordinary legislative and beneficial organizations, being more of the nature of social or friendly gatherings, where brotherly love reigns supreme and everyone is ready to sacrifice opinion, time and comfort for the good of all.

General Meetings and Annual Retreats

Besides the weekly meetings of each Conference, all the members of all the Conferences in a city meet four times a year, in what are known as General Meetings. Here members from all sections and Conferences have the opportunity of forming a personal acquaintance with each other. Each Conference presents a report of its work for the preceding three months and the Presidents of Special Works give detailed statements of the conditions and requirements of the work intrusted to their

Committees. These meetings are generally honored by the presence of local clergymen, and not infrequently Bishops and Archbishops assist to give words of advice and encouragement to the Brothers.

Although at the General Meetings the reports presented cover the four quarters of the calendar year, the meetings themselves are not fixed with a view of any equal division of time, but are held on the four Feasts of the Society as follows: First, the first Sunday of Lent; second, the Sunday of the Good Shepherd (the anniversary of the Translation of the Relics of St. Vincent de Paul, which is the second Sunday after Easter); third, the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul (July 19th) or the Sunday immediately following; fourth, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8th) or the Sunday immediately following. On these days the members of the Society receive Holy Communion and attend the General Meeting.

A Retreat or Triduum of the members of the Conferences under Patricular Councils occurs once a year. On these occasions the clergymen in charge of the Retreat recalls to the minds of the members their duties and obligations to the Society, its poor, and to the charity work it conducts. All members who

possibly can do so are expected to join in these annual exercises.

Duties of Active Members

Active membership is limited to practical Catholic men over eighteen years of age, who are desirious of securing their sanctification by assisting in the relief of the poor or in other good works adopted by the Society. In a general way, it may be said that a member fulfills his duties as such by: First, attending at least three of the weekly meetings of his Conference every month; second, visiting once a week the poor family or families assigned to him, or the prison, almshouse, hospital or other institution he has engaged to visit, or in performing such other work as he has assumed, in accordance with the Rule of the Society; third, attending each year the general Communions and meetings of all the members of the Society in the town in which he resides, on the four Feast Days of the Society; fourth, making a donation of such amount as he can afford to the secret collection which is taken up at the weekly Conference meetings as also at the General Meetings; fifth, attendance at the General Meetings; sixth, attendance at the exercises of the annual retreats.

Aspirant Members

Aspirant members are chosen from among youths under eighteen years. They attend all meetings and take part in the works of the Conferences under the direction of the older members. Sometimes, when sufficiently numerous, they are organized into Conferences, and adopt special works, as, for instance, securing the regular attendance of children at Sunday School and teaching catechism.

By the Papal Brief of January 10, 1845, Aspirant Members participate in all the Indulgences accorded Active Members as hereinbefore specified.

The hope of the Society in the future lies principally in the training of the youth of today. Active Members by bringing to their sons, younger brothers and young relatives and friends a knowledge of the Society, its works and the personal service of the members, will awaken in their hearts an interest which will steadily develop into a love of works of charity, a love of each other, and a love of God's poor, thus leading to the desire for membership.

Honorary Members

Honorary Members are practical Catholic men who do not join actively in the works of

the Society and are not expected to attend the Weekly Meetings of the Conferences, but who make an annual offering of a fixed sum of money. They are expected to receive Holy Communion and attend the general meetings on the Society's Feast Days, and to assist at the annual Retreats and other pious ceremonies.

Honorary Members are entitled to the same Indulgences as Active Members upon the usual conditions stated in the list of Indulgences for Active Members in so far as they can be applied to Honorary Members.

Benefactors, Benefactresses and Subscribers

These are not members of the Society. They are charitable persons of either sex, of any creed, who, by their contributions, make the Society the almoner of their alms. Many Conferences are greatly assisted by the zeal of lady benefactresses who act as collectors, secure employment for needy women, or do works in which the members cannot engage in a direct manner.

Special Works of the Society

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul had originally for its special and almost exclusive object the visiting of the poor at their own homes, and it was through this that it initiated

its members in the practice of charity. No deed was better calculated to excite zeal, none to be more fruitful. As the poor were visited, their great wants were revealed; one good work, at first isolated, brought on another; a seed thrown at random raised new ones; from the garret, the cellar or other humble dwelling of the poor, the Vincentian went to the school, the workshop, the prison, the hospital, and, in fact, everywhere that want, misery and misfortune found an abiding place, or where material or spiritual good could be done. The Special Works thus undertaken embrace nearly all the miseries of human life, and there exists between them a harmony which none could foresee and which, therefore, can be ascribed to God alone. Many of the splendid charity institutions administering to needs of neglected children and the friendless aged owe their beginning to the efforts of humble members of the Society, who, because of their knowledge of conditions, urged that the problems be cared for.

While the visitation of the poor in their homes is the great work of the Society, it is not always possible to provide all of the members with the opportunity to make family visits. In some localities the poor are not numerous; some Conferences have not sufficient funds,

and again, some excellent Vincentians feel called to other works for which they are specially adapted. Among the Special Works the principal ones are:

Visiting inmates of prisons, almshouses, hospitals and other institutions,
Finding homes for poor children,
Spiritual training of boys and young men,
Christian Burial for the poor,
Circulating good literature,
Summer outings for poor mothers and children,
Secretariats for the poor,
Securing employment for men and boys.

These and other works engage the attention of the members, for it is an axiom that "no work of charity is foreign to the Society." It must not be concluded, however, that the Society in each locality is bound to adopt all, or even the greater part of the works enumerated. In some countries, certain works could not be inaugurated which, in other countries, reach a high state of development and efficiency. Sometimes the social condition of a country, at others the weakness of the Society, or the peculiar circumstances surrounding it and often the interference or prohibition of the civil authorities, render impossible the establishment of certain classes of charitable work.

It, therefore, becomes the duty of the Vincentians to venture upon no Special Work without mature consideration and the especial sanction of the ecclesiastical authorities.

Source of Revenues of the Society

The revenues of the Society are derived from the following sources:

1. The secret collection at the weekly Conference meetings and at the monthly Council meetings.
2. The annual contributions of honorary members.
3. Donations from benefactors and benefactresses.
4. Moneys contributed in poor boxes in the churches. Moneys contributed in boxes of St. Anthony's Shrine.
5. Annual charity collections.
6. Entertainments—Lectures.
7. Legacies.

Remember

The real object of the Society is the welfare of the soul of the individual member. Visiting and assisting the poor and the unfortunate are the means to this end, but not the end itself.

No dues, nor fines or penalties for neglect

of duty, are imposed on members, nor are the obligations of personal service assumed obligations of conscience, that is, they do not bind under pain of sin. The Society trusts entirely to the zeal of its members, to their love of God and of their neighbor, for a strict compliance with the Rules.

The Society does not assume the public duty of aiding all the poor of a parish or town. It does what it can, with the means at its disposal, to help the poor in soul and body. It follows the advice of Tobias: "If you have much, give abundantly, if you have little take care even to bestow willingly a little."

The Society's Adaptation to New Conditions

From the days of Ozanam the Presidents of the Council General, the Society's spokesmen, have pointed out, from time to time, that its members develop and sustain its works with efficiency, not only in respect to its spiritual aspect and the personal service rendered by the members to the families aided, but also that the needs of the poor be suitably cared for. Consequently, the Society has the power to adapt itself to changing economic conditions of our civilization. This power of adaptation is aptly outlined in the following excerpts from the address of the President General to the

members of the Paris Conferences at the General Meeting, December 14, 1919, published in the Society's *Bulletin* of March, 1920:

"In order to develop normally and to live a useful and efficacious existence, every association must continually adapt itself to its environment always in conformity with the principles upon which it was founded. It is thus acted upon by two forces, tradition and evolution, which, though apparently mutually exclusive, often have bearing upon each other. . . . No more need be said to convince you that our Society should evolve, that is adapt itself to changing external conditions, that it may the better carry out its missions, provided always that its traditions are preserved inviolable. The traditions of the Society, which should be the fountain of our inspiration, must be respected. Immobility, however, means death; activity is a sign of life and progress. It is not enough to say: 'We are doing what Ozanam did.' On the contrary, very often, we are not doing even that. Ozanam did not feel that he had discharged all his obligations to his fellowmen when he had made a few visits to the poor. In addition, he comforted the imprisoned, looking after apprentices, taught soldiers. We must ask ourselves the question: 'If Ozanam were alive now, what would he

do?' Ozanam's mind was broad, deep, enthusiastic and reflective. He lived in God and his intimacy engendered in him a remarkable clearness of vision. He saw into the heart of things when he wrote, that what divided men was not so much the question of political forms as the social problem. 'We must precipitate ourselves,' he said, 'between these two hostile forces, the one animated by the powers of gold, the other by the power of despair, if we wish to prevent a conflict, or at least to mitigate its consequences.' . . . According as the activity of our Society developed, its character became truly social, so that it has been described as the most social of all works."

THE SOCIETY IN THE UNITED STATES

THE Society of St. Vincent de Paul is the oldest lay Catholic Society in our country. It has carried on its work uninterruptedly since first established in 1845. From the beginning it received warmest approval from members of the hierarchy. Its earliest sponsors were Right Reverend Bishop J. Timon, of Buffalo; the Most Reverend Peter R. Kenrick, of St. Louis, in 1845, and the Most Reverend John Hughes, of New York, in 1848.

In the pastoral letter of the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore the Archbishops and Bishops of the United States warmly approved the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, urging its extension in all the dioceses and parishes of the country. The late Cardinals Gibbons, McCloskey and Farley; Archbishops Corrigan, Ireland, Feehan, Ryan, Williams, Quigley, Elder, Blenke and Riordan, the great churchmen of their time, were staunch friends and propagators of the Society, and during its long career of usefulness it has merited the approval of the Ordinaries of all the dioceses where it has carried on its work. The establishment of the Superior Council of the United States

was cordially approved by the Archbishops in Annual Meeting in 1911. At the time of its institution in 1915, His Eminence, James Cardinal Gibbons, became its first Spiritual Director, and his successor as Archbishop of Baltimore, Most Reverend Michael J. Curley, D.D., has followed him as our spiritual guide.

Conformably to the plan adopted at the institution of the Superior Council of the United States of America in 1915, each ecclesiastical province, when satisfactorily organized, shall be presided over by a Metropolitan Central Council.

At the present time, there are fourteen provinces in the United States. Metropolitan Central Councils have been instituted in nine of them: Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis and St. Paul. Though as yet lacking such Councils the Society is organized and operating in the other provinces: Dubuque, Milwaukee, Oregon, Santa Fé and San Francisco.

The Superior Council of the United States holds jurisdiction over the entire Society in this country and is the medium of communication and relations between its subordinate divisions and the Council General.

The Metropolitan (Provincial) Central

Councils are limited in their jurisdiction to the supervision of the Society in their respective Provinces, and are under the jurisdiction of the Superior Council.

The Diocesan Central Councils are limited in their jurisdiction to the dioceses represented by them. They are under the jurisdiction of their respective Metropolitan Central Councils or, in the absence of such Councils, of the Superior Council.

The Rules with regard to organization, object, membership, jurisdiction, administration, etc., apply without exception in the United States as they do for the numerous divisions of the Society throughout the entire world.

The *Bulletin* of the Council of Ireland, the English translation of the French *Bulletin,* is intended for the use of the Society in English-speaking countries. There are also national publications. In the United States *The Catholic Charities Review,* succeeding *The St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly,* maintains a section devoted to the Society under the direction of the Superior Council, and is recognized as the official publication of the Society in the United States.

Facts to be Remembered

The Society is a Catholic organization of laymen as distinguished from an organization of Catholic laymen.

Membership in the Society is limited to men. A similar organization, The Ladies of Charity, founded by St. Vincent de Paul, meets the desire for organization by women.

Unless a Conference is aggregated by the Council General its members are not eligible for the spiritual rewards provided by the Sovereign Pontiffs. Though Conferences are aggregated the spiritual rewards are limited to those members complying with the required conditions, one of which is attendance at three of the weekly meetings in each month.

In order to function properly, a Conference must meet weekly throughout the year, there being no vacation periods. Its relief to the assisted families must be personally brought to them in their homes weekly by the members of the Conference; visits to families must never be made by one member—see Rule 20, Div. IV; when reporting visits count only the times the families have been visited by the committee from the Conference, not the number of members engaged in making the visits; no matter how many members call when a visit is made, it counts but one visit.

The opening and closing prayers, spiritual reading, and secret collection must be part of the order of business of every meeting or they cease to be Conference meetings.

THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFFS

AND THE

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

THE Society of St. Vincent de Paul, almost from its beginning, has been deeply indebted to the Sovereign Pontiffs for their approval of its object and Rules, and for their kindness of heart in placing the Society under the constant care of a Cardinal Protector, who represents its interests before the Sacred Congregation. The following excerpts indicate the esteem in which the different Popes have held the Society since its organization:

Pope Gregory XVI

Twelve years after the inception of the Society, His Holiness conferred various Indulgences upon the Benefactors of the Society by a Brief, dated the twelfth of August, 1845, which opens as follows:

"Whereas, We have learned that the Society established under the auspices and name of St.

Vincent de Paul, and devoted to the exercise of works of Christian charity, is, in an eminent degree, advancing the good of religion and the welfare of the faithful; and in order that the said Society may daily make new progress We have determined to enrich with the Heavenly Treasures of the Church all such as shall bestow their care and wealth to the furtherance of the Society aforesaid, to the end that by the spiritual advantages held out to them their zeal may be more and more enkindled."

Pope Pius IX

On the fifth of January, 1855, Pope Pius IX gave audience to 450 members of the Society, whom he deigned to address, concluding with these words:

"I bless you in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, and may their benediction be with you all the days of your lives. May it extend over all those who co-operate in your charitable works, whether in Rome or Italy, in Europe, or in the whole world."

Pope Leo XIII

In his Encyclical Letter, *"Humanum genus,"* dated the twentieth of April, 1884, His Holiness referred to the Society in the following terms:

"We cannot pass in silence a Society that has given so many admirable examples, and deserved so well of the people. We refer to that which has taken the name of its *Father*, St. Vincent de Paul. The works achieved by the Society, and the object which it has proposed to itself are well known. The efforts of its members tend simply, by a charitable initiative, to lead them to the help of the poor and unfortunate; an end attained with wonderful wisdom and a not less admirable modesty. But the more this Society conceals the good that it does, the better fitted it is for the practice of Christian charity and the relief of the miseries of men."

On many subsequent occasions His Holiness deigned to express his approbation of the Society, and in a letter under his own hand, dated the tenth of February, 1898, addressed to the President General (Paris) he thus referred to it:

"The Society of St. Vincent de Paul devotes itself entirely, in spirit and by its rules, to relieve the sufferings of the wretched; it strives with its whole zeal, with its whole care, to imitate and reproduce the boundless charity of Christ; and, consequently, it has always been, and it is, the object of Our most affectionate interest."

Pope Pius X

On the eleventh of May, 1904, His Holiness, Pope Pius X, deigned to receive the President General and a deputation from the Council General (Paris) and to address them in the following gracious terms:

"Beloved Sons: I wish to thank you for all the good you are doing. Yes, assuredly, I know your Society. I saw it at work in Mantua and in Venice, where it was rendering invaluable services to the poor by distributing alms, but still more so by bringing them spiritual aid. How many families have been saved by its intervention? But, above all, how many young men have been led back to the right path by it? The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a work of apostleship for good, while there are others which are at the present day, works of apostleship for evil. Continue, therefore, to exercise charity in the way you are doing; you will find in it peace for your soul, and when one has done some good in the day he rests more peacefully at night. Your Society is the work needed for the present time. I will encourage it and bless it."

Pope Benedict XV

Our Holy Father, in a letter to the President General in October, 1914, wrote:

"We have never ceased to take the most lively interest in this Association, eminently Catholic and Social, and it is with profound satisfaction that We have followed, and still follow, the development of this wide-spreading tree, which has extended its branches and borne its precious fruits of supernatural charity into all parts of the world.

"When at Bologna, We had the opportunity of seeing more closely the countless benefits of the Apostleship of this Society, so penetrated with the spirit of Jesus Christ, and the good work of its Conferences, which We have endeavored to further as far as we are able.

"This is to tell you, dear son, of the love, which, following the examples of Our predecessors of holy memory, We bear in Our heart for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and for all its members, who not long since renewed their zeal and the ardor of their devotion, on the occasion of the never-to-be-forgotten centenary celebration of the birth of him who was the principal founder and the most illustrious Apostle of the Society.

Pope Pius XI

Replying to the New Year's address of the Council General, His Holiness Pius XI graciously wrote as follows:

"Dear Son, Health and Apostolic Benediction. We deeply love this Society of whose Council General you are the President, from whence flow the blood and strength which are diffused into the veins, as it were, of the individual branches throughout the world. We love it for its works and the alms which it dispenses to relieve and console the poor who are close to Our inmost heart, as they are most dear to Jesus Christ, of Whom, by the will of God, We are the Vicar.

"The happy result of your ministration is such that, thanks to your discretion and your tact in reaching the heart of the poor whose distress you alleviate, even those found ignorant of their religion are often filled with admiration for divine Charity, and softened by your kindliness, are gradually led back to their ancestral Faith and to a Christian Life.

"All that you and the other members of your Council have recently told Us concerning the progress of this excellent work and of its development during the past year, impels Us, in gratitude for such an abundance of fruits, to render full and joyous thanks to Divine Providence.

"You have, in fact, brought to Our notice many pleasant subjects for Our reading and Our thought. The large number of your

groups or so-called Conferences, which have sprung up everywhere, not alone in the Old World, but beyond the seas and even in countries where your Society was barely known; the very useful custom, introduced in various places, of assemblages at stated times at which the members of the Society of a whole nation are brought together; and, furthermore, that wonderful impulse of Charity extending from higher institutions of learning to other schools, enabling the young students to meet in Conferences of their own, distinct from the Parish Conferences.

"Aside from the misery which, following the precept and example of your founders you have long been accustomed to relieve, you have discovered on all sides much other distress resulting from the Great War which seemed to appeal to your zeal for help, and you have undertaken this new mission with as much ardor as courage.

"For all these things which We have called to mind, We publicly laud this Society, which can never be sufficiently commended, and We congratulate you on its growth. With Fatherly zeal We exhort all your members to persevere in the daily practice of Christian Charity, to the end that they may also make daily and abundant progress in the practice of other vir-

tues and in the love of God, Who was Himself humble and poor on earth.

"Meanwhile, as a pledge of your heavenly reward and as an evidence of Our especial affection, We lovingly impart to you, Dear Son, to the Council General over which you preside, and to the whole Society, Our Apostolic Benediction.

"Given at Rome, near St. Peter's, January 10, 1924, in the second year of Our Pontificate."

In response to a letter of the President of the Superior Council of the United States, presenting the greetings and expressions of filial loyalty of the Society in that jurisdiction, the Holy Father deigned to write the following letter:

"Since charity, according to the testimony of Our Lord Jesus, is the most excellent of all the Christian virtues, We cannot but heartily approve of that Society of St. Vincent of which you are the zealous leader; and this all the more because you are wont, not by mere words, but by actual works, to bring succor to your neighbors in their needs. And so We have derived no little joy from your letters which We have lately received, in which you announce the increased progress of that same Society, for you are striving to bring aid not only to your own fellow countrymen, but you are also endeavoring to assist the needy of other nations, of those nations specially

which have suffered very grievously because of the terrible war. In this We must admire the Providence of the most loving God Who at the opportune time is wont to move the hearts of the Faithful to offer fitting help to the afflicted. Would indeed that many more were numbered in your ranks, as you yourself express the hope, zealous in the same cause, sharers in the same endeavors, since certainly no undertaking of the Faithful can be more salutary, at this particular time, than with overflowing charity to alleviate the hardships of the unfortunate. Continue, therefore, as you have begun, to deserve well of Church and State, and thus you will merit greater praise from Us, and a more abundant reward of grace from God. In fine, We fervently wish an increase of every blessing to this distinguished Society of yours, and in a truly paternal spirit—mindful of your expression of devotion—as an earnest of heavenly gifts, and also as a mark of Our special love, We most affectionately bestow upon you, devoted Son, and upon each member of your Society, upon their families, and upon all those who assist you, Our Apostolic Benediction.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, the Second Day of May, 1924, the Third of Our Pontificate.

PIUS XI, *Pope.*"

THE RULE
WITH
EXPLANATORY NOTES

December, 1835.

Here, at last, is the commencement of the written constitution for which we have so long wished. It has had to wait for a long time, for already some years have passed since our association came into existence. But were we not bound to feel assured that God wished that it should continue to live, before laying down the form in which it should do so? Was it not necessary that it should be well laid—that it should know what Heaven required of it,—that it should judge what it could do by what it had already done, before framing its Rules and prescribing its duties? Now we have only to form, as it were, into Rules, the usages already followed and cherished;—and this is a sure guarantee that our Rules will be well received by all, and never be forgotten.

The name: Conference.—Our little Association bore at first the name of Conference of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; that name of *Conference,* which was its own even from the beginning, it has adhered to, in order to preserve it, so that the circumstances of its origin should not be forgotten. Some amongst us, whilst devoting ourselves to the defence of the dogmas of religion, in the then very stormy discussions of literary societies or Conferences, thought that it was not enough to speak, that it was necessary also to act: hence came the works of charity to which they devoted themselves—hence the *Conference of Charity.*

Having become numerous, and being obliged to divide into sections,—moreover, many of us desiring to meet together in other towns, where they were to reside thenceforth, the name of *Conference* has continued to be applied to each of those sections, all of which are comprised under the common denomination of the *Society of St. Vincent de Paul.*

What names to avoid.—We must ever avoid giving to our work the name of any particular member, whatever may have been the services which he is reputed to have rendered to it, or the names of the places in which it meets, for fear that we may accustom ourselves to look upon it as the work of man. Christian works belong to God alone, the sole author of all good.

It was an impulse of Christian piety which called us together; we must, therefore, look for the rules of our conduct nowhere but in the spirit of religion—in the examples and words of Our Saviour—in the instructions of the Church—in the lives of the saints. Such are the reasons why we have placed ourselves under the Patronage of the Blessed Virgin and St. Vincent de Paul, to whom we devote ourselves with especial veneration, and whose footsteps we must earnestly strive to follow.

It pleased Jesus Christ first to practice that which afterwards He was to teach mankind; *cœpit facere et docere.* We are desirous of imitating that divine model so far as our weakness will allow.

Object of a Conference.—The object then of this *Conference* is, firstly, to maintain its members, by mutual example and advice in the practice of a Christian life; secondly, to visit the poor at their dwellings, to bring them succor in kind, to afford them,

also, religious consolations, remembering these words of our Master: *Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei*—"Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God"; thirdly, to apply ourselves, according to our capabilities and the time which we can spare, to the elementary and Christian instruction of poor children, whether free or imprisoned, seeing that what we may do for the least amongst our brethren, Jesus Christ has promised that He will accept as done for Himself; fourthly, to distribute moral and religious books; fifthly, to apply ourselves to all other kinds of charitable works for which our resources may be adequate, but which will not interfere with the chief object of the Society, and for which it may demand our aid.

Composition of the Society.—The Society of Charity is composed of active members, and of others who cannot devote themselves to the works in which it is engaged. The latter assist the former by their efforts and by their influence: by their offering and their prayers they supply the place of that actual co-operation which they are obliged to forego.

Virtues to be aimed at.—The Society of Charity should endeavor to attain and practice every virtue; there are, however, some virtues which are more essentially necessary to them, for the due discharge of the charitable duties to which they devote themselves. Among these are self-denial, Christian prudence, the active love of our neighbor, zeal for the salvation of souls, meekness in heart and word, and above all, the spirit of brotherly love. They ought, therefore, to meditate on those maxims of the Gospel which recommend these virtues, and make them the rule of their lives. It is for this purpose that these maxims are

here detailed, and a development given to them applicable to our work.

1. By *self-denial* we should understand the surrendering of our own opinion, without which surrender no association is a lasting one. The man who is in love with his own ideas will disdain the opinion of others; contempt for our brethren, far from uniting, engenders division. We should, therefore, willingly acquiesce in the judgment of others, and should not feel aggrieved if our own propositions be not accepted. Our mutual goodwill should proceed from the heart, and be unlimited.

We should likewise avoid all spirit of contention with the poor, and we must not consider ourselves offended if they do not yield implicitly to our advice; we should not attempt to make them receive it as from authority and by command—we should content ourselves with proposing what is good, and zealously exhorting them to practise it, leaving to God the care of making our words fructify, if such be His will.

2. *Christian Prudence.*—Among the poor, there are some who have the happiness of being Christians; others are careless, and some, perhaps, impious. We ought not to repulse them, even in this latter case; our language ought to vary according to the dispositions of those whom we address, remembering that Jesus Christ recommended His disciples to unite the wisdom of the serpent to the simplicity of the dove. Kindness opens the heart to confidence, and it is by corporal charity therefore that we prepare the way for spiritual benefits. St. Vincent de Paul often recommended that the latter should not be tried until the former had been freely bestowed. Moreover, the poor are of different sexes. As the Society of Charity is chiefly composed of young men, they should never

forget that their mission is not to persons of the other sex if they be young, lest they should meet with their own destruction, whilst endeavoring to promote the salvation of others; moreover, it is necessary to shun even the appearance of evil, and everything which might scandalize the weak.

3. *Love of our neighbor, and zeal for the salvation of souls.*—In this consists the *Conference of Charity.* He who is not animated by this twofold sentiment, which in the Christian forms but one feeling, should not become a member. We must never murmur at the labors, the fatigues, nor even at the repulses to which the exercise of charity may subject us. We expose ourselves to all these things, in associating for the service of our neighbor. Neither should we regret the pecuniary sacrifices that we make to our work, esteeming ourselves happy in offering something to Jesus Christ in the person of the poor, and in being able to bring some relief to His suffering members. We should make these sacrifices in a generous spirit, and we will not expect that, in the distribution of relief, any privilege should be accorded to the poor whom we ourselves have taken charge of, merely because we may fancy that we have contributed to the common fund a larger proportion than others.

4. *Humility.*—Our Divine Model was meek and humble of heart; "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart"—*Discite a Me quia mitis sum et humilis corde;* and our patron, St. Vincent de Paul, had nothing more at heart than *meekness* and *humility,* which are inseparable. We should be kind and obliging to one another, and we should be equally so to the poor whom we visit. We can have no power over souls except through meekness,—*Beati*

mites quia possidebunt terram—"Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land." The spirit of humility and meekness is more particularly necessary in giving advice, and in exhorting others to fly from evil and to practice virtue. Without meekness, zeal for the salvation of souls is a ship without sails.

5. It is a *brotherly spirit* which will make our *Society of Charity* become beneficial to its members and edifying to others. Faithful to the maxims of Our Divine Master and of His beloved disciple, let us love one another. We should love one another now and ever, far and near, from one Conference to another, from town to town, from nation to nation. This friendship will render us able to bear with each other's failings. We shall never give credence to an evil report of a brother but with regret; and when we cannot reject the evidence of facts.

Then, in order to conform ourselves to the will of Him Who has confided to each one the care of his neighbor—*Unicuique mandavit Deus de proximo suo*—"God hath given everyone charge over his neighbor"—in a spirit of charity, and with all the earnestness of sincere friendship, we will ourselves counsel our falling, or fallen brother, or cause advice to be conveyed to him; we will endeavor to strengthen him in virtue, or raise him from his fall. If any member of the Conference shall fall ill, his brethren will visit him, will tend him, if it be necessary, will assuage the weariness of his convalescence; if he be dangerously ill, they should take the utmost care that he receives the Sacraments; in a word, the troubles and the joys of each of us should be shared by all, in accordance with the advice of the Apostle, who tells us to weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice.

Union.—The union existing among the members of the *Conference of Charity* of St. Vincent de Paul should be cited as a model of Christian friendship, of a friendship stronger than death, for we will often remember in our prayers to God the brethren whom we have lost.

This sentiment, which, with us, will make of all our hearts one heart, of all our souls one soul,—*Cor unum et anima una*—One heart and one mind,—will endear to each of us our little fraternal society; we shall bless it for the good, however trivial, it enables us to perform. We shall love it tenderly and even with a greater affection than any other similar work; not because of its excellence, or from pride, but as dutiful children love a poor and deformed mother more than all other women, however remarkable they may be for their riches and for their attractions.

Some other consequences of the foregoing maxims:

To avoid envy.—One of the vices most opposed to charity and Christian humility is envy. We will avoid it, not only amongst ourselves, but also in reference to other societies, whose object, like our own, is to succor our neighbor. We will ardently desire, and will behold with pleasure, their prosperity, and the good they accomplish; we will rejoice if new brethren join us, if existing societies unite themselves to ours, since greater good will spring from the union; but we will see without jealousy our Christian friends devoting themselves to other good works, and other societies doing God's work in their own manner and independently of us. We should have but one desire,—to see every one doing good and succoring those who suffer: *Quis tribuat ut omnis populus prophetet?*—"Who shall grant that all the people may prophesy?"

Nay, more, although we may be fonder of our little association, we will always consider it as less excellent than others; we will regard it, as in fact it is, as a work formed nobody knows by whom, nor how,—born yesterday, and which may die to-morrow.

The same spirit will ever induce us individually to wish the offices of the Society confided to others rather than to ourselves.

No mission to teach others.—Consult the Pastors.— We will always remember that we are only laymen, and for the most part young men, without any mission to teach others. For this, and every other reason, we will pay the utmost deference to the counsels which may be given to us by the Society or its heads; we will, above all, follow with respect the course which the ecclesiastical superiors think proper to point out to us. St. Vincent de Paul wished that his disciples should not undertake any good work without having first secured the assent and received the benediction of the local Pastors. Neither will we ever undertake any new and important work within an ecclesiastical jurisdiction, without consulting him who is at the head of it. We will do nothing in opposition to spiritual authority, considering as an evil the good which we would attempt contrary to its opinion. We will extend, to a certain degree, this deference to the Sisters of religious orders, or even to laymen who may have offices of charity to perform towards those whom we also desire to succor, esteeming it an honor to be considered the least among our brethren, and to be no more than servants and instruments of others in ministering to the poor. Lastly, among ourselves the younger will defer to the elder, and the newly-admitted members to those who are of longer standing.

No distinction of persons in distribution of relief.—

We are the dispensers of the gifts of God, Who is the common Father of mankind, and makes His sun shine upon all. Our love of our neighbor, then, will be without respect of persons. The title of the poor to our commiseration will be their poverty itself. We will not inquire whether they belong to any party. Jesus Christ came to redeem and save all men, the Greeks as well as Jews, barbarians as well as Romans. We will not discriminate more than did He between those whom suffering and misery have visited. Nevertheless, St. Paul recommends to Christians to assist, in the first place, their brethren in the faith: *ad domesticos fidei.* We, therefore, should show special interest in those poor, who have the happiness of being good Christians, and who honor that title by the virtues which religion inculcates.

No politics.—The spirit of charity, together with Christian prudence, will further induce us to banish political discussions forever from our meetings, both general and ordinary. St. Vincent de Paul would not allow his priests even to converse upon those differences which arm Princes against each other, or upon the motives of rivalry which estrange nations. With still stronger reason, those who wish to keep united whilst carrying on the administration of charity should abstain from troubling themselves about political controversies which array parties in opposition, one against the other, and from starting, amongst themselves, those irritating questions which divide the world. Our Society is all charity; politics are wholly foreign to it.

Care in selection of candidates.—Another efficacious means of maintaining unity amongst us, and of cementing the Christian friendship of which it is the foundation and the charm, is to present for admission

into the Society only such candidates as are worthy of the confidence and affection of our brothers. It might be an advantage for some individual to participate in our charitable work, but, perhaps, it might not be an advantage for the Society to count him amongst its members. Previous, therefore, to the admission of any friend into our ranks, we will carefully consider whether he be calculated to draw closer those ties which bind us to each other; whether his amiability and Christian demeanor will enhance the value of the small relief which he will be commissioned to bring to the distressed; whether the firmness of his character authorizes us to hope that he will persevere in his generous resolutions.

The choice of new members is of the utmost importance. Defections we have already had to lament —we have them even now: We will have them always:—such is human weakness. Yet the Society will inspire some confidence,—will be efficient for some good only so far as its members will prove its worth by their whole life and particularly by their perseverance in the acts of charity to which they devote themselves.

Discretion.—Another point no less worthy of our consideration is the discretion which should accompany zeal for the salvation of souls. All fervor is not holy, nor accepted by God. All times are not suitable for instilling new and Christian teaching into the heart. We must know how to wait for God's own time, and to be patient as He is. Often we must wait entire weeks before we are able to get in effectively even one word of moral or edifying advice. Above all, we must never be importunate upon this point; we are not commissioned to perform good which it is out of our power to effect. On the other

hand, the apparently trifling results of our mission must not discourage us. Perhaps the Almighty wills not that we ourselves should witness the happy results which our efforts and our sacrifices may at last produce. Our charity would be less meritorious, and might expose us to vain glory, if we saw it always crowned with success.

Christian prudence we should never omit in the ministrations which we fulfill towards the poor. Unfortunately, and especially in large towns, the poor sometimes skillfully conceal such resources as they may have, and thus draw to themselves that sympathy and those alms which should be shared with others. Therefore without being too suspicious, which might be unjust towards them, we must be circumspect. It is not wise to rely too implicitly upon their first statements.

It is therefore our custom, and we will continue, to seek information about our poor, from the Sisters of Charity, the parochial Clergy, and all other persons who may be able to give us correct information as to their state. We must be provident for the poor, who are seldom provident for themselves, if we wish to become their true benefactors. We will impress upon them that an existence sustained by the aid of charity is very precarious—we will induce them to exert themselves to earn their own livelihood—we will point out to them sources of employment, and we will assist them to obtain it. If they are sick or unable to work, we will second their endeavor to obtain admission to the asylums established for the aged, the infirm, the sick.

Smallness of Alms.—In conclusion, we will never be ashamed of the smallness of our alms. That which is small in the eyes of the rich, is great in the

eyes of those who possess nothing. The smallness of our alms is one of the conditions of our existence. We have no other ordinary resources but our own voluntary offerings; these will not be sufficient for considerable works of charity; but our tender interest —our very manner, will give to our alms a value which they do not possess in themselves.

We must now lay down some rules, and mention some practices we have been in the habit of following. Other usages may perhaps become necessary; but the existing rules, and the customs in use, will suffice to guide our future progress.[1]

1 So far the Explanatory Notes are the textual reproduction of the first edition of the Manual.

PRAYERS.

At the Opening of the Meeting

In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Veni, Sancte Spiritus; reple tuorum corda fidelium, et tui amoris in eis ignem accende.

Come, O Holy Ghost; fill the hearts of thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of thy love.

V. Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur;

V. Send forth thy Spirit and they shall be created.

R. Et renovabis faciem terræ.

R. And thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Oremus

Deus, qui corda fidelium Sancti Spiritus illustratione docuisti, da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere, et de ejus semper consolatione gaudere, per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Let us pray

O God, who through the light of the Holy Ghost, didst instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolation, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Ave Maria

V. Cor Jesu sacratissimum.

R. Miserere nobis.

Hail Mary

V. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

R. Have mercy on us.

V. Regina sine labe concepta,
R. Ora pro nobis.
V. Sancte Vincenti a Paulo,
R. Ora pro nobis.

V. Queen conceived without original sin,
R. Pray for us.
V. Saint Vincent de Paul,
R. Pray for us.

The Closing Prayers

In nomine Patris, etc.
V. Sancte Vincenti a Paulo,
R. Ora pro nobis.
V. Sancte Josephus,
R. Oro pro nobis.

In the name, etc.
V. Saint Vincent de Paul,
R. Pray for us.
V. Saint Joseph,
R. Pray for us.

Oremus

Clementissime Jesus qui beatum Vincentium flagrantissimæ charitatis tuæ apostolum in Ecclesia suscitasti, effunde super famulos tuos eumdem charitatis ardorem, ut amore tuo libentissime in pauperes impendant sua, et seipsos super impendant; qui cum Deo Patre vivis et regnas in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia sæcula sæculorum.

R. Amen.

Let us pray

Most gracious Jesus, Who didst raise up blessed Vincent to be an apostle of thy most ardent charity in the Church, pour forth upon thy servants that same fervor of charity, that, for love of Thee, they may with a most ready heart bestow their goods upon the poor and spend themselves for their souls: Who with God the Father livest and reignest in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end.
R. Amen.

For Benefactors

Benefactoribus pauperum gratium largiri dignare, piissime Jesu, qui impertituris misericordiam in nomine tuo centuplum regnumque cœleste promisisti.

R. Amen.

Sub tuum præsidium confugimus, sancta Dei Genitrix; nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus; sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.

R. Amen.

Et fidelium animæ per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace.

R. Amen.

In nomine Patris, etc.

O most loving Jesus who hast promised a hundredfold reward and a heavenly kingdom to those who do works of mercy in Thy name, grant, we beseech Thee, Thy grace to the benefactors of the poor.

R. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O thou glorious and blessed Virgin.

R. Amen.

And may the souls of the faithful through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.

In the name, etc.

A Prayer Used by the Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

According to the terms of the Brief of Our Holy Father Pope Pius IX of the 13th September 1859, an Indulgence of 300 days is granted to the members and benefactors of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, each time they recite this prayer.

EX LIBRIS PROVINCIAE
PER STUDIO THEOL.
S. CAROLI S.J.
22,857

Gratias agimus tibi, Domine, qui Societatem sancti Vincentii a Paulo tot ac tantis hactenus benedictionibus cumulare dignatus es.

Hanc igitur nobis dilectissimam Societatem precamur usque respicias, sed et singulas illius partes et eam imprimis cui adscribimur. Fac, quæsumus, ut propagetur ubique et in perpetuum confirmetur, vigente semper eodem, qui fuit ab initio, pietatis, simplicitatis et fraternæ dilectionis affectu ita ut illius opera, ab omni prorsus terrestri fœnore et cupiditate libera, magis ac magis in Cœlum fecundentur.

Scis ipse, Domine quam multis indigeant tum spiritualibus, tum temporalibus bonis familia pauperum, quibus pro parte, exigua nimis, opitulamur. Scis et quam multis ipsi indigeamus.

We give Thee thanks, O God, for the many great blessings Thou hast hitherto been pleased to heap upon the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

We beg of Thee to look down still graciously upon this Society, so dear to us, upon its several branches and in particular upon that branch to which we belong. Grant that it may be everywhere extended, strengthened, and that it may retain the same spirit of devotion, simplicity, and fraternal charity which animated it from the beginning, so that its undertakings being fully divested of all earthly interests and worldly desires, may become daily more fruitful for Heaven.

Thou knowest, O Lord! the spiritual and temporal necessities of the poor families whom we endeavor to assist. Thou knowest, likewise, our own. Have mercy on us, O Lord, and let all expe-

Miserere nostri, Domine, et infinitam misericordiam tuam omnes pariter sentiamus.

Nostris quoque fratribus qui eodem nobis conjunguntur sodalitio, si qui variis nunc premuntur angustiis, subveni, piissime Deus. Infunde illis fortitudem, prudentiam, pacem et fiduciam quæ a te sunt. Nostræ et illorum ærumnæ, patienter pro Christo toleratæ, tibi sint acceptæ et in salutem fructificent.

Fusis tandem precibus te, Domine, per merita Domini nostri Jesu-Christi, specialemque beatæ Mariæ et santi Vincentii intercessionem deprecamur, ut solutis nostræ mortalitatis vinculis, omnes nobis propinquitate seu necessitudine devinctos, pauperes nobis commissos, carissimosque sodales, regni tui nobiscum facias esse participes. Amen.

rience the effects of Thy infinite mercy.

Help also, O most merciful God, any of our brethren of this Society, who may now be weighed down by divers sorrows. Grant them that fortitude, prudence, peace, and confidence which proceed from Thee. May their sorrows and ours, patiently endured for Christ's sake, be acceptable to Thee, and be fruitful unto salvation.

Lastly, O Lord! we beseech Thee, through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the special intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of our holy patron, St. Vincent, to unite us one day in Thy Kingdom to our friends and kinsfolk, to the families of the poor and to our brethren of this Society. Amen.

The Veni Creator

Come, O Creator Spirit!
Visit this soul of Thine;
This heart of Thy creating
Fill Thou with grace divine.

Who Paraclete art call'd,
The gift of God above,
Pure Unction; holy Fire,
And Fount of life and love.

Finger of God's right hand,
The Father's promise true,
Who sevenfold gifts bestowest,
Who dost the tongue endow.

Pour love into our hearts;
Our senses touch with light;
Make strong our human frailty
With Thy supernal might.

Cast far our deadly foe;
Thy peace in us fulfill;
So, Thee before us leading,
May we escape each ill.

The Father, and the Son,
Through Thee may we receive,
In Thee, from Both proceeding,
Through endless time believe.

Praise to the Father be;
Praise to the Son, Who rose;
And praise to Thee, blest Spirit,
While age on ages flows.

Amen.

V. Send forth Thy Spirit, and our hearts shall be regenerated:

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let Us Pray

O God, Who, through the light of the Holy Ghost, didst instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Spirit we may be truly wise, and ever enjoy His consolation, through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

R. Amen.

THE DE PROFUNDIS

Out of the depths I have cried to Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice.

Let Thine ears be attentive: to the voice of my supplication.

If Thou, O Lord, wilt mark our iniquities: Lord, who shall stand it?

For with Thee there is merciful forgiveness: and by reason of Thy law I have waited for Thee, O Lord.

My soul hath relied on His word: my soul hath hoped in the Lord.

From the morning watch even unto night: let Israel hope in the Lord.

Because with the Lord there is mercy: and with Him plentiful redemption.

And He shall redeem Israel: from all his iniquities.

V. Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord.

R. And let perpetual light shine upon them.

V. May they rest in peace.

R. Amen.

V. Lord, hear my prayer.

R. And let my cry come unto Thee.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with Thy spirit.

Let Us Pray

O God, the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful; grant to the souls of Thy servants and Thy handmaids departed the remission of all their sins, that, through the devout prayers of Thy Church on earth, they may obtain that remission of pain which they have ever desired. Who livest and reignest world without end.

R. Amen.

V. May they rest in peace.

R. Amen.

BRIEFS OF THE HOLY FATHERS

BRIEF OF HIS HOLINESS GREGORY XVI

TO THE

COUNCIL GENERAL OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

GREGORIUS PP. XVI

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam

Romanum decet Pontificem cœlestibus Ecclesiæ thesauris eas præsertim pias hominum Societates ditare, quæ in Christianæ charitatis operibus obeundis omni cura, studioque versantur. Itaque cum Præses et Consultores generales Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo, Parisiis primum institutæ, enixis precibus a Nobis flagitaverint, ut nonnullas indulgentias tum plenarias tum partiales ipsi Societati concedere velimus, Nos libenti animo piis eorum

GREGORY XVI, PP.

To be held in perpetual remembrance

It is meet that the Roman Pontiff should enrich with the heavenly treasures of the Church especially those pious societies of men who earnestly and zealously employ themselves in the performance of the works of Christian charity. We have, therefore, deemed it our duty to gladly comply with the earnest entreaties of the President and members of the General Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, first instituted at Paris, who have be-

precibus adnuendum censuimus.

Quapropter omnibus et singulis ad Consilium generale Societatis ejusdem, nunc Parisiis institutum, pertinentibus, vel addictis Consiliis particularibus Parisiorum et aliarum civitatum vere pœnitentibus et confessis, ac sacra communione refectis, dummodo omnibus, vel tribus ex quatuor Consilii cœtibus in mense habitis interfuerint, plenariam peccatorum suorum Indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus.

Item omnibus ipsius Societatis sociis, ut dicunt, activis, necnon consultoribus, et aliis, de quibus habita mentio est, qui commemoratam Indulgentiam ibi jam fuerint assecuti, dummodo omnibus, vel tribus ex quatuor conventibus, seu Conferentiis in mense habitis interfuerint, ac vere pœnitentes, et con-

sought us to grant to this Society some indulgences both plenary and partial.

Wherefore, we mercifully grant, in the Lord's name, a Plenary Indulgence and remission of sins, to all and every one belonging to the General Council of the said Society now instituted at Paris or attached to the Particular Councils of Paris and of other cities, who being truly penitent, have confessed their sins and received Holy Communion and provided they have assisted at all the meetings of the Council held during the month or at three out of the four.

Moreover, to all who are styled active members of the said Society as well as to members of the Councils and others mentioned above who may have gained the aforesaid Indulgence are likewise granted a Plenary Indulgence on condition of their being truly penitent, after confessing their sins, receiving the

fessi, sanctissimum Eucharistiæ, sacramentum sumpserint, plenariam similiter Indulgentiam largimur.

Præterea eamdem pariter plenariam Indulgentiam tribuimus ab omnibus in prædictam Societatem cooptandis acquirendam quo die vere pariter pœnitentes, et confessi, ac S. communione refecti ab eadem Societate in diversis gradibus activis Membri aspirantis, Membri ordinarii, et Consultoris generalis recepti fuerint.

Insuper omnibus Sociis tum activis, tum honorariis commemoratæ Societatis, qui diebus festis Immaculatæ Conceptionis B. Mariæ Virginis, et S. Vincentii a Paulo, et Dominica secunda post Pascha, quæ est anniversaria dies translationis reliquiarum ejusdem S. Vincentii, æque ac feria secunda post Dominicam primam Quadragesimæ, vere pœnitentes et confessi sacram synaxim exceperint in Missa quæ

Holy Communion, and being present at all or three out of four of the Conferences or meetings held during the month.

Moreover, we grant the same Plenary Indulgence to all admitted into the said Society on the day on which they shall be received in any active capacity, whether as aspirant member or ordinary member of any Particular Council or member of the General Council, provided they be truly penitent, have confessed their sins and received Holy Communion.

Moreover, we grant a Plenary Indulgence to all, both active and honorary members of the said Society who, on the Feasts of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of St. Vincent de Paul, on the second Sunday, after Easter (which is the anniversary of the translation of the relics of St. Vincent), and on the Monday after the First Sunday in Lent, being truly peni-

prædictis diebus pro Societate celabratur, atque cœtui generali, qui his temporibus habetur, interfuerint, plenariam pariter Indulgentiam impertimur.

Atque etiam Sociis omnibus et Societatis benefactoribus in mortis articulo constitutis, si vere pœnitentes et confessi, vel quatenus id facere nequiverint, saltem contriti nomen Jesu ore si potuerint, sin minus corde devote invocaverint, et mortem tanquam peccati stipendium de manu Domini, patienti atque alacri animo susceperint, plenariam similiter Indulgentiam concedimus.

Ad hæc Sociis omnibus activis ejusdem Societatis, quotiescumque, corde saltem contrito, aliquam conferentiam, aliquam pauperem familiam, aut scholas, officinasque pauperum visitarint, vel quodcumque

tent, and having confessed their sins shall receive the Holy Communion at the Mass which on the aforesaid days is celebrated for the Society, and shall have been present at the general meeting which is held on those occasions.

And also we in like manner grant a Plenary Indulgence to all members and benefactors of this Society, at the hour of death, who, being truly penitent, and confessing their sins, or, if that be not possible, devoutly invoke with contrite hearts the Name of Jesus orally, or at least mentally, and accept death with patient and ready mind as the wages of sin.

We, moreover, in the customary form of the Church remit in favor of all active members of the said Society, seven years and as many as forty days of the penances enjoined on them, or otherwise due by them; as

aliud bonum opus juxta mentem dictæ Societatis præstiterint, septem annos, ac totidem quadragenas de injunctis eis, seu alias quomodolibet debitis pœnitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus. Quam quidem partialem Indulgentiam singuli Socii activi memoratæ Societatis lucrari poterunt, quotiescumque corde contrito sacro Missæ sacrificio pro anima alicujus Socii celebrando, adstiterint, et quoties corpora pauperum ad Ecclesiasticam sepulturam fuerint prosecuti.

Quas omnes, et singulas Indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones, ac pœnitentiarum relaxationes etiam animabus Christi fidelium, quæ Deo in charitate conjunctæ ab hac vita migraverint, per modum suffragii applicari posse indulgemus.

Denique omnibus aliis sive Consiliis, sive Contuuntur, sive ab eodem, tatis, quæ approbante Consilio generali instiferentiis ejusdem Socie-

often as they, with at least a contrite heart, shall visit any Conference or poor family, or the schools or workshops of the poor, or shall perform any other good work in accordance with the intention of the said Society. Which partial Indulgence every individual active member of the said Society can gain as often as with a contrite heart he shall assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, when celebrated for the soul of any member, and as often as he shall attend the funerals of the poor.

We further allow all or any of these indulgences, remissions of sins, and relaxations of penances, to be applied by way of suffrage to the souls of Christ's faithful who have departed this life, in loving union with God.

And finally by the same our Apostolic Authority we grant and extend all and every one of the above-mentioned Indulgences to every other

sive a Consiliis particularibus civitatum, aut provinciarum ab ipso jam institutis, item Sociis, qui degunt in locis, in quibus nondum viget Conferentia, omnes et singulas commemoratas Indulgentias, si in locis eisdem præstiterint veluti poterunt consueta opera, aliasque præscriptas conditiones impleverint, eadem Auctoritate Nostra Apostolica concedimus, atque elargimur.

Non obstantibus Nostra, et Cancellariæ Apostolicæ Regula de non concedendis Indulgentiis *ad instar,* aliisque Constitutionibus et Ordinationibus Apostolicis, cæterisque contrariis quibuscumque.

Volumus autem, ut præsentium Litterarum transumptis, seu exemplis etiam impressis manu personæ in Ecclesiastica dignitate constitutæ subscriptis, eadem prorsus fides adhibeatur, quæ adhiberetur, ipsis

Council or Conference of the same Society established with the approbation of the Council General, whether by itself or by the Particular Councils or towns or provinces already established by it. Also to members who live in places where as yet no Conference exists, provided that in these places they shall perform as far as they can the customary works, and fulfill the other conditions laid down.

Notwithstanding our own and our Apostolic Chancery's Rule concerning not granting Indulgences *Ad Instar* and other Apostolic Constitutions and Ordinances and any other things whatsoever to the contrary.

It is our pleasure also that copies of these present letters, whether in manuscript or in print having the sign manual of the properly constituted ecclesiastical authorities, shall possess the same authority, and

præsentibus, si forent exhibitæ, vel ostensæ.

Datum Romæ apud sanctum Petrum sub annulo Piscatoris, die x Januarii MDCCCXLV, Pontificatus Nostri anno decimo quarto.

A. CARD. LAMBRUSCHINI.

✠

Locus Sigilli.

have the same respect paid to them as if these present themselves were exhibited or shown.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the Fisherman's ring, the tenth day of January, 1845, the fourteenth year of our Pontificate.

A. CARD. LAMBRUSCHINI.

✠

Place of the Seal.

SUPPLEMENTARY BRIEF

GREGORIUS PP. XVI

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam

Quum Societatem sub auspiciis et nomine S. Vincentii a Paulo institutam Christianæ charitatis operibus exercendis intentam, Religionis bono, et fidelium commoditati præclare noverimus inservire, ut ea nova in dies incrementa suscipiat, de celestibus Ecclesiæ thesauris eos omnes ditandos censuimus, qui ad

GREGORY XVI, POPE

To be held in perpetual remembrance

Whereas we have learned that the Society established under the auspices and name of St. Vincent de Paul, and devoted to the exercise of works of Christian charity, is in an eminent degree advancing the good of religion and the welfare of the faithful, we have determined, in order that the said Society may

juvandam Societatem ipsam curas suas, opesque contulerint, ut hoc illorum studium spiritualibus propositis gratis magis, magisque exardescat.

Itaque omnibus et singulis Christi fidelibus utriusque sexus, qui Eleemosynam fixam, et constantem ad Consilium generale transmittent, vere pœnitentibus, et confessis, et sacra communione refectis plenariam peccatorum suorum indulgentiam, et remissionem semel in mense misericorditer in Domino elargimur.

Præterea omnibus utriusque sexus Christi fidelibus, qui hujusmodi fixam, et constantem Eleemosynam transmittent ad Consilia particularia, provinciarum, sive ubrium a Consilio generali instituta, indulgentiam septem annorum, et totidem

daily make further progress, to enrich with the Heavenly Treasures of the Church all such as shall bestow their care and wealth to the furtherance of the Society aforesaid, to the end that by the spiritual advantages held out to them their zeal may be more and more enkindled.

Wherefore we mercifully grant in the Lord, a Plenary Indulgence and remission of sins once a month to all and every one of the Faithful of either sex who shall give to the General Council a fixed and regular amount of alms, provided they be truly penitent, confess their sins, and receive the Holy Communion.

Moreover, we grant an Indulgence of seven years and as many quarantines once a month to all the Faithful of either sex who shall give a like fixed and regular subscription to the Particular Councils of Provinces or Towns, established by the Council General.

quadragenas semel in mense concedimus.

Insuper utriusque sexus Christi fidelibus, qui seu per Chirographum, seu alio quocumque modo spondeant, se aliquam Eleemosynam fixam, et constantem collaturos Conferentiis adprobatis, vel a Consilio generali, vel a Consiliis particularibus, ad hoc delegatis, indulgentiam unius anni semel pariter in mense lucrandam elargimur.

Denique omnibus, et singulis Christi fidelibus utriusque sexus, indulgentiam septem annorum, et totidem quadragenarum semel in mense lucrandam impertimur iis scilicet diebus, quibus pro Consiliis, generali, vel particularibus stipem emendicando collegerint.

Non obstantibus Nostra, et Cancellariæ Apostolicæ Regula de non concedendis indulgentiis *ad instar,* aliisque Constitutionibus, et Ordinationbus Apostolicis cæterisque contrariis quibus-

And further, we grant an Indulgence of one year, to be gained likewise once a month by each of the Faithful of either sex who shall, in writing or otherwise, engage to pay a fixed and regular contribution to Conferences approved by the General Council or by Particular Councils delegated for that purpose.

Lastly, we bestow on all and every one of the Faithful of either sex an Indulgence of seven years and as many quarantines to be gained once a month on the days when they solicit and collect contributions in aid of the Councils whether General or Particular.

All this, notwithstanding our own and the Apostolic Chancery's Rule concerning not granting Indulgences *Ad Instar,* and other Apostolic Constitutions and Ordinances, or any other

cumque.

Volumus autem, ut præsentium Litterarum transumptis, manu personæ in Ecclesiastica dignitate constitutæ subscriptis eadem prorsus fides abhibeatur, quæ adhiberetur ipsis præsentibus si forent exhibitæ vel ostensæ.

Datum Romæ apud S. Mariam Majorem, sub annulo Piscatoris, die xii Augusti MDCCCXLV, Pontificatus Nostri anno decimo quinto.

A. CARD. LAMBRUSCHINI,
Ep. Sabinus.

✠

Locus Sigilli.

things whatsoever to the contrary.

It is our pleasure also that copies of these present letters, whether in manuscript or in print, having the sign manual of the properly constituted ecclesiastical authorities, shall possess the same authority and have the same respect paid to them as if the original were exhibited or shown.

Given at Rome, at St. Mary Major's, under the Fisherman's Ring, the 12th day of August, 1845, the fifteenth year of our Pontificate.

A. CARD. LAMBRUSCHINI,
Bishop of Sabina.

✠

Place of the seal.

BRIEF

Of His Holiness Pius Pie IX to the Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

PIUS PP. IX

Ad perpetuam rei memor

Exponendum nobis curarunt sodales Societatis a S. Vincentio a Paulo nuncupatæ, ipsis jam alias ab hac Apostolica Sede Plenariam Indulgentiam diebus festis Conceptionis B. Mariæ Virginis Immaculatæ ac ejusdem sancti Vincentii Paulani fuisse concessam, non aliter tamen nisi intra missæ actionem quæ hisce diebus pro ipso Societate celebrari solet lucrifaciendam. Quamobrem a nobis humiliter petierunt, ut hanc Sedis Apostolicæ concessionem extendere quodammodo dignaremur. Nos igitur piis hisce precibus quæ in spirituale Christifidelium bonum cedunt benigne annuere volentes,

PIUS PP. IX

For perpetual remembrance

The members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul have made known to us that the Apostolic See had formerly granted a Plenary Indulgence on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and on that of St. Vincent de Paul, to be gained only at the Mass celebrated on both these days for the Society itself wherefore they have presented us with a humble petition, that we would extend somewhat further this favor of the Apostolic See. Wishing then to comply with these pious desires for the spiritual good of the Faithful, we, in virtue of our Apostolic power, and confiding in

Auctoritate Apostolica, deque Omnipotentis Dei misericordia ac BB. Petri et Pauli Apostolorum ejus auctoritate confisi, omnibus et singulis præfatæ Societatis sodalibus, ut Plenariam Indulgentiam festivitate Conceptionis B. Mariæ Virginis Immaculatæ lucrifaciendam, vel ipsa festivitate, vel sicubi transfertur die quo ibidem celebratur; Plenariam Indulgentiam vero dei festo S. Vincentii Paulani concessam eodem die, ac septem continuis diebus immediate sequentibus, una tantum vice hujus octidui spatio ad unius cujusque sodalis libitum eligenda, lucrari possint ac valeant; dummodo injuncta omnia ad eas consequendas rite adimpleant, tenore præsentium concedimus et impertimur; in contrarium facientibus non obstantibus quibuscumque. Volumus autem ut præfatæ indulgentiæ Parisiis tantum intra Missarum solemnia quæ ante Sacras Corporis Vincentii a

the mercy of Almighty God, and by the authority of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, give and grant by these presents to all and each one of the members of the said Society, provided they faithfully fulfill the conditions prescribed, the Plenary Indulgence attached to the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the B. V. Mary, either on the day of the feast itself, or on the day to which the feast happens to be transferred. And as to the Plenary Indulgence granted for the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, we grant that it may be gained either on the day itself or on any day the member may choose within the seven following days; that is to say, once within the octave; notwithstanding any regulation to the contrary. But it is our pleasure, that in Paris only the aforesaid Indulgences can be gained at the Masses which are celebrated in presence of

Paulo reliquias, etsi non pro Societate celebrentur, lucro esse possint atque præsentium Litterarum transumptis seu exemplis etiam impressis manu alicujus Notarii publici subscriptis, et sigillo Personæ in Ecclesiastica dignitate constitutæ munitis eadem prorsus habeatur fides, quæ ipsis haberetur præsentibus, si exhibitæ ostensæve forent.

Præsentibus perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris.

Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum, sub annulo Piscatori, die xviii Martii MDCCCLIII, Pontificatus Nostri anno septimo.

Pro Dno

CARD. LAMBRUSCHINI,
J.-B. BRANCALEONI-
CASTELLANI, subst.

the Relics of St. Vincent de Paul, even though these Masses be not offered for the Society. And it is our pleasure that the manuscript or printed copies of these present letters signed by a public notary, and furnished with the seal of a person of ecclesiastical dignity, shall obtain the same faith and the same effect as the originals themselves, if they were produced and shown.

These presents are to avail in perpetuity.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the Seal of the Fisherman, the 18th of March, 1853, the seventh year of Our Pontificate.

For His Eminence

CARD. LAMBRUSCHINI,
J.-B. BRANCALEONI-
CASTELLANI, Substitute.

BRIEF OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS IX

Granting Indulgences to the Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Who Attend Spiritual Exercises

PIUS PP. IX

Ad perpetuam rei memor.

Exponendum nobis curarunt dilecti Filii, præses generalis et consiliarii Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo, Lutetiæ Parisiorum institutæ, ejusdem Societatis sodales spiritualibus exercitiis gregatim quotannis vacare pie consuevisse. Qui quidem mos ut longe lateque propagetur, ac in uberiorem Christifidelium fructum cedat, humiles nobis preces admorunt ut hanc sodalium pietatem cœlestium Ecclesiæ munerum, quorum dispensatores Nos voluit Altissimus, elargitione juvaremus. Nos itaque salubrem frugiferamque hujusmodi consuetu-

PIUS PP. IX

For perpetual remembrance

Whereas our well-beloved sons, the President General and the Members of the Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, established in Paris, have made us acquainted with the fact that among the members of the Society there has grown up the pious custom of undertaking spiritual exercises in common every year. Wherefore with the view of spreading this custom far and wide and of making it more abundantly fruitful to the faithful in Christ they have humbly petitioned us to encourage this pious practice by be-

dinem in Domino commendantes, utque magis in dies magisque invaleat ex animo optantes, piis hisce votis annuendum censemus. Quamobrem auctoritate nobis a Domino tradita, deque omnipotentis Dei misericordia ac BB. Petri et Pauli Apostolorum ejus auctoritate confisi, omnibus et singuli præfatæ Societatis sodalibus, qui spiritualibus hujusmodi exercitiis, sic ut præfertur haberi solitis singulis diebus devote interfuerint, vereque pœnitentes et confessi in postremo horum dierum Missæ sacrificio sacra sese communione refecerint, ac pro christianorum principum concordia, hæresum extirpatione, ac S. Matris Ecclesiæ exaltatione pias ad Deum preces effunderint, plenariam omnium peccatorum suorum indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus. Qui vero corde saltem contriti eorumdem spiritualium exercitiorum partem tan-

stowing upon it the heavenly favors of the Church of which it has pleased the Most High to make us the dispensers. We, therefore, commending to the Lord this salutary and fruitful custom and eagerly desirous of its ever growing development deem it advisable to accede to their pious wishes. Wherefore we, by the authority intrusted to us by Our Lord, and relying upon the mercy of the Almighty God, and by the authority of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, grant in the Lord a Plenary Indulgence and remission of sins to each and all of the members of the aforesaid Society, who shall have devoutly attended the whole course of spiritual exercises, as are related to be held, and who, being truly penitent, shall have confessed their sins and received Communion at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on the last day of these exercises, and moreover have

tum absolverint, ac ut supra oraverint, centum dies de injunctis eis seu alias quomodolibet debitis pœnitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus. Quas omnes et singulas Indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones ac pœnitentiarum relaxationes, etiam animabus. Christifidelium quæ Deo in charitate conjunctæ ab has luce migraverint, per modum suffragii applicari posse indulgemus. In contrarium facientibus, non obstantibus quibuscumque præsentibus perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris.

addressed fervent prayers to God for peace and concord among Christian princes, for the extirpation of heresies and the exaltation of the Holy Mother Church. To those again who, with a truly contrite heart have attended only a part of the above exercises, and have said the prayers above indicated, we remit one hundred days' penance, either laid upon them by the Church in the usual way, or in other way whatsoever incurred. We concede, also, that all and every one of the above Indulgences, remissions of sins, and abatements of penances, be likewise made applicable by way of suffrage, to the souls of the Faithful who have departed this life in loving union with God. Notwithstanding anything whatsoever to the contrary these presents to avail in perpetuity.

Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum sub annulo Piscatoris, die xviii Martii

Given at Rome, under the Fisherman's Seal, the 18th day of March, 1854,

MDCCCLIV, ... Pontificatus Nostri anno octavo.

Pro Dno
Card. LAMBRUSCHINI,
J.-B. BRANCALEONI,
Cancell., subs. (L. S.).

the eighth year of Our Pontificate.

For H. E.
Cardinal LAMBRUSCHINI,
J.-B. BRANCALEONI,
Substitute.

BRIEF OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS IX

GRANTING AN EXTENSION OF INDULGENCES TO THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

By attaching fresh indulgences to the recitation of certain prayers either by the members of the Society or by the poor families whom they visit.

PIUS PP. IX

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam

Renuntiandum curavit Nobis Summum Consilium quod Parisiis constitit, piæ Societatis cui a S. Vincentia a Paulo nomen factum, Apostolicis Litteris Januario mense Anno MDCCCLXV datis, omnibus et singulis e dicta Societate Christifidelibus plenariam indulgentiam quotannis festiva die Immaculatæ Conceptionis

PIUS IX, POPE

For the perpetual remembrance of the thing.

The General Council of the pious Society which takes its name from St. Vincent de Paul, and meets in Paris, has informed us that by Letters Apostolic of the month of January, A. D. 1845, a Plenary Indulgence on the usual conditions was granted to each and every member of the said Society every year on the

Deiparæ Virginis Mariæ, et feria secunda, quæ prima occurrat in quadragesima, sub assuetis conditionibus lucrifaciendam fuisse concessam: deinde earumdem litterarum vi veniam factam ut suprascripti fideles plenariam pariter consequi cum Domino possent, si statis Sodalitii festis, cæteris pietatis operibus rite absolutis, sacro adstarent quod jussu Sodalitii ejusdem celebraretur.

Jam vero, cum ab eodem Consilio relatum modo sit Nobis, magis e re Sodalium fore, si prima atque altera ex plenariis indulgentiis, quas memoravimus, in alium diem traducantur postremæ vero adjecta opera audiendi Sacrum aliqua ex parte immutetur, supplicatumque prætere ut novis ad Salutem æternam præsidiis tam universum Sodalitium, quam fideles suæ curæ creditos munire de Apostolica Nostra Auctoritate dignaremur, Nos, qui ea

feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and on the first Monday in Lent.

Also that by virtue of the same letters, the aforesaid faithful were allowed to gain a similar Plenary Indulgence in the Lord on certain feasts of the Society, if, having complied with the usual conditions, they should be present at a Mass celebrated at the direction of the Society.

Now, however, that we have learned from the said Council that it would better suit the members of the Society if the first and second Plenary Indulgence which we have mentioned were transferred to another day, and if the condition of hearing Mass, annexed to the last-mentioned Indulgence, were somewhat modified.

And that the same Council has moreover petitioned us to be pleased in virtue of our Apostolic authority to fortify with

præsertim fidelium Sodalitia cordi habemus, quæ dum egenos præsenti ope juvant, eorum animos ad virtutem comparant, informant, piis hujusmodi Votis annuendum ultro censuimus. Quamobrem de Omnipotentis Dei misericordia, ac BB. Petri et Pauli Ap. ejus auctoritate confisi, plenariam quidem indulgentiam quam dicti Sodales festivitate Immaculatæ Conceptionis Beatæ Mariæ Virginis lucrari possunt, dummodo idem festum in Dominicam non cadat, vel aliculi in aliam Dominicam amandetur, ad Dominicum promixe subsequentem extendimus, sic ut prædicti Sodales plenariam indulgentiam vel in festo Immaculatæ Conceptionis, vel in Dominica proxime subsequenti lucrari pro suo libito valeant: item plenariam indulgentiam memorata feria secunda eisdem concessam in Dominicam immediate antecedentem, cæteris omnibus servatis, tenore præ-

fresh aids to eternal salvation the whole Society as well as the Faithful intrusted to its care. We who have especially at heart those societies of the Faithful which, while they relieve the poor in their personal want, instruct their minds and incline them to virtue, have willingly resolved to grant their pious petition.

Wherefore relying on the mercy of Almighty God, and by the authority of His Holy Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, we extend to the Sunday immediately following the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary the Plenary Indulgence which the members of the said Society could heretofore gain on the feast itself, provided that the said feast does not fall on Sunday, or is not transferred in any district to another Sunday. Therefore the members of the aforesaid Society may gain a Plenary Indulgence at their option

sentium transferimus. Præterea, ne quo in loco Sacerdotum penuria impedimento sit, per presentes impertimus, ut iidem Sodales, quamquam Missæ Sacrificio simul congregati adstiterint, quod minime jubente Sodalitio celebratur, tamen, si reliqua omnia rite præstiterint, plenariam æque cum Domino consequantur. Deinde de ejusdem Auctoritatis Apostolicæ plenitudine omnibus et singulis utriusque sexus Christifidelibus, quibus eadem Societas a sancto Vincentio a Paulo nuncupata ope et opera suppetias fert, vere pœnitentibus, et Confessis, ac S. Communione refectis, qui quam libet Ecclesiam seu Oratorium publicum festivitatis D. N. J.-C. Die festo S. Josephi, B. M. V. Sponsi a primis Vesperis: die vero, quo spiritualis, quem vocant, recessus quotannis absolvitur, ab ortu usque ad occasum solis dierum hujusmodi devote visitaverint, ibi-

either on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, or on the Sunday immediately following. In like manner, by virtue of the present letters, we transfer the Plenary Indulgence which may be gained, granted on the Monday already mentioned to the Sunday immediately preceding, all other conditions remaining the same.

Moreover lest a dearth of priests should prove a hindrance, we permit by these presents that when the members of the same Society hear Mass in common, even though the Mass be not celebrated expressly, they may equally gain a Plenary Indulgence in the Lord at the direction of the Society, if they have fulfilled all the other conditions.

Moreover from the plenitude of the same Apostolic power, we mercifully grant in the Lord, to each and all of the Faithful of either sex, who are relieved by the aid and exertion of the

que pro Christianorum principum concordia, hæresum extirpatione, ac Sanctæ Matris Ecclesiæ exaltatione pias ad Deum preces effuderint, quo die præfatorum id egerint, plenariam omnium peccatorum suorum indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus. Denique omnibus et singulis Christifidelibus pio huic Sodalitio quocumque tandem nomine addictis, vel benefactoribus, quoties corde saltem contriti propriam Sodalitii precationem, cujus exordium: "Gratias agimus tibi, Deus qui Societatem S. Vincentii a Paulo," etc., quovis idiomate recitaverint, tercentum dies;

Universis vero quibus dicta Societas opitulatur, si corde saltem contrito, aut soli, aut cum suis, Orationem Dominicam et Salutationem Angelicam, adjecta quocumque pariter idiomate invocatione hujusmodi: "Regina sine labe originali concepta, ora pro nobis. Sancte

said Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Plenary Indulgence and remission of all their sins, on the feast of Christmas, on the feast of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and on the day which terminates the yearly Retreat; provided that being truly penitent, and having confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, they shall devoutly visit some church or public oratory, and pour forth fervent prayers to God for peace among Christian princes, the extirpation of heresies and the exaltation of our Holy Mother the Church; such visit to be made, on the feast of St. Joseph, from the first vespers, and on the concluding day of the yearly Retreat, between the rising and setting of the sun. In fine, for each and all of the members of the Faithful connected in any way with this pious Society, as well as for its benefactors, we remit, in the usual form of the

Vincenti a Paulo, ora pro nobis"—recitaverint qua vice id egerint, centum dies de injunctis, seu alias quomodolibet debitis pœnitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus. Quas omnes et singulas indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones, ac pœnitentiarum relaxationes etiam animabus Christi fidelium, quæ Deo ni charitate conjunctæ ab hac luce migraverint, per modum suffragii applicari posse elargimur. In contrarium facient, non obstant, quibuscumque præsentibus perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris.

Church, three hundred days of penance, whether enjoined or otherwise due, as often as they shall, with a contrite heart, recite in any language the special prayer of the Society, which begins: "We give Thee thanks," etc.

And for every one relieved by the Society, we remit in the usual form of the Church one hundred days of penance as often as, with a contrite heart, they shall recite, alone or with their families in any language, the Lord's Prayer and Angelical Salutation, adding the invocation: "Queen, conceived without original sins, pray for us. St. Vincent de Paul, pray for us." We permit all and every one of these indulgences, remissions of sin, and relaxations of penances to be applied by way of suffrage to the souls of the Faithful who departed life in the friendship of God. The present letters are to have effect permanently

Volumus autem ut præsentium Litterarum transumptis seu exemplis etiam impressis, manu alicujus Notarii publici Subscriptis, et Sigillo Personæ in Ecclesiastica dignitare constitutæ munitis eadem prorsus fides adhibeatur, quæ adhiberetur ipsis præsentibus, si forent exhibitæ vel ostensæ.

Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum, sub annulo Piscatoris, die xiii Septembris MDCCCLIX, Pontificatus Nostri anno decimo quarto.

Pro Dno Card. MACCHI,
J.-B. BRANCALEONI-CASTELLANI, *subst.*

for the future, notwithstanding any contrary regulation.

We desire that all copies of the present letters, whether in print or manuscript, which shall be signed by some public notary and furnished with the seal of some ecclesiastical dignitary, shall be credited as these present letters themselves.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the ring of the Fisherman, the 13th day of September, 1859, in the fourteenth year of our Pontificate.

For H.-E. Card. MACCHI,
J.-B. BRANCALEONI-CASTELLANI, deputy.

BRIEF OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS IX

Granting Indulgences to the Fathers and Mothers of Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

PIUS PP. IX

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam

Supplices nobis admotæ sunt preces nomine dilecti filii Ad. Baudon, hodierni Præsulis Generalis Societatis Sancti Vincentii de Paulo nuncupatæ, ut quæ indulgentiæ tum plenariæ, tum partiales aliæque spirituales gratiæ ab hac Sancta Sede Apostolica eidem Societati concessæ adhuc fuerunt, easdem omnes et singulas propinquis quoque sodalium præfatæ Societatis communicare de benignitate Apostolica dignaremur. Nos ad augendam fidelium religionem et animarum salutem cœlestibus Ecclesiæ thesauris pia charitate intenti piis hujusmodi votis, quantum cum Domino possu-

PIUS IX, POPE

For the perpetual remembrance of the thing

An humble petition has been presented to us in the name of our dear son, Ad. Baudon, President-General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul praying that we would deign of our Apostolic favor, to extend to the parents also of the members of the said Society, all the Indulgences, whether Plenary or Partial, and the other spiritual favors, hitherto granted to the Society by this Holy Apostolic See. We, urged by gracious desire to promote the religion of the Faithful and the salvation of souls by means of heavenly treasures of the Church, wish in the Lord to satisfy, as far as we may, such pious de-

mus obsecundare volentes, genitoribus tantum memoratorum sodalium nonnullas ex iis indulgentiis dictæ Societati jam concessis quas ipsi lucrari possunt impertiri decrevimus. Igitur de Omnipotentis Dei misericordia ac BB. Petri et Pauli, Ap. ejus auctoritate confisi, omnibus et singulis sodalium Societatis S. Vincenti de Paulo nunc et pro tempore existentium genitoribus tantum in cujuslibet eorum mortis articulo, si vere pœnitentes et confessi ac S. Communione refecti vel, quatenus id facere nequiverint, saltem contriti nomen Jesu, ore si potuerint, sin minus corde devote invocaverint, plenariam, iisdemque qui singulis diebus spiritualibus exercitiis a dicta sodalitate habendis devote interfuerint, ac postremo eorumdem die, vere pœnitentes et Confessi ac S. Communione refecti sacro sancto Missæ sacrificio adstiterint, ac pro Christianorum principum consires and have resolved to grant to the fathers and mothers exclusively of the members mentioned above, some of the Indulgences already granted to the said Society in respect of its members.

Wherefore we, through the mercy of the Almighty God, and relying on the authority of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, grant a Plenary Indulgence for the moment of death exclusively, to each and all of the fathers and mothers of the present and future members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, who being truly contrite, they shall have confessed, received Holy Communion, or, if that be not possible, devoutly invoke with contrite hearts the name of Jesus orally, or, at least mentally; and besides, we likewise grant a Plenary Indulgence, and the remission of all their sins, to the same persons, who, each day, shall have assisted devoutly at the spiritual

cordia, hæresum extirpatione, peccatorum conversione, ac S. Matris Ecclesiæ exaltatione pias ad Deum preces effuderint, plenariam similiter omnium peccatorum suorum indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus.

Insuper præfatis fidelibus supre memoratis, qui, quolibet die spiritualibus iisdem exercitiis rite adstiterint, centum dies et quoties sacro in suffragium alicujus defuncti sodalis celebrando interfuerint aut pauperum corpora ad sepulturam associaverint, aut quodcumque aliud pietatis vel charitatis opus eidem Societati consentaneum exercuerint, septem annos totidemque quadragenas de injunctis eis, seu alias quomodo libet debitis pœnitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus.

exercises practised by the said Society, and who, on the last day of those exercises, being truly contrite, and having confessed and communicated, shall have assisted at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and offered up to God fervent prayers for concord between Christian princes, the extirpation of heresy, the conversion of sinners, and the exaltation of our Holy Mother the Church.

Moreover, to the Faithful herein mentioned, who shall have piously assisted on any day whatever, at the same spiritual exercises, we remit, in the accustomed form of the Church, a hundred days of the penances which shall have been imposed on them, or which they shall have otherwise incurred in any way; and seven years and seven quarantines, as often as they shall have assisted at a Mass celebrated for the soul of any deceased member of the said Society, or attended

Quas omnes et singulas indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones ac pœnitentiarum relaxationes etiam animabus Christifidelium quæ Deo in charitate conjunctæ ab hac luce migraverint per modum suffragii applicari posse impertimus.

In contrarium facientibus, nonobstantibus quibuscumque præsentibus, perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris. Volumus autem ut præsentium litterarum transumptis seu exemplis etiam impressis manu alicujus notarii publici subscriptis et sigillo personæ in ecclesiastica dignitate constitutæ munitis eadem prorsus fides adhibeatur, quæ adhiberetur ipsis præsentibus si forent exhibitæ vel ostensæ.

Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum, sub annulo Piscatoris, die v Septembris 1873, Pontificatus Nostri

the funerals of the poor, or performed any other pious and charitable work in conformity with those practised by the said Society. We also grant that all and each of those indulgences, remissions of sins, and relaxations of penances may be applied, by way of suffrage, to the souls of the Faithful, who have departed this life in loving union with God.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, the present brief shall avail in perpetuity. It is our will that there shall be accorded to the written or printed copies of these presents, which shall be signed by a public notary and attested by the seal of an ecclesiastical dignitary, the same faith which should be granted to these same presents, if they were exhibited or produced.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the ring of the Fisherman the 5th day of September,

anno vigesimo octavo.

Pro D. Card. Asquini,
F. Profili, *Substitutus.*
Concordat cum originali.

D. Lucciardi,
Secretarius Nunciaturæ Apostolicæ.
Parisiis, die 6 Decembris 1873.

1873, in the twenty-eighth year of Our Pontificate.
For H. E. Card. Asquini,
F. Profili, *Deputy.*
The translation is conformable to the Latin text.

D. Lucciardi,
Secretary to the Apostolic Nunciature.
Paris, 6 December, 1873.

PETITION OF THE COUNCIL GENERAL

And Rescript of Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII

Containing some modifications of the former Briefs granting Indulgences to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the extension of some of these Indulgences.

Beatissime Pater—Ad pedes Sanctitatis Vestræ humiliter provoluti Præses generalis Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo enixe deprecantur, ut nonnulla pia opera pro lucrandis Indulgentiis a Sodalibus dictæ Societatis injuncta tantisper immutare et aliquas Indulgentias determinatis personis jam concessas, ad alias benigne extendere dignetur.

Most Holy Father—Humbly prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, the President General and the members of the Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, earnestly entreat you to deign to modify some of the works of piety enjoined on the members of the said Society for the gaining of Indulgences, and to extend to others

Humiliter enim exponunt:

1°. Ex Brevibus, 1 Januarii 1845, 18 Martii 1853 et 13 Septembris 1859, atque ex Rescripto S. Congregationis Indulgentiarum 17 Julii 1886, Indulgentias plenarias pro quatuor principalibus festis ejusdem Societatis concessas, variis conditionibus esse subjectas, quas plerique sodales non recte intelligunt, aut easdem die fixo adimplere nequeunt, ita ut sæpe sæpius in periculo versentur non lucrandi præfatas Indulgentias.

2°. Ex Brevi 5 Septembris 1873, nonnullas Indulgentias eruitur esse concessas genitoribus Sodalium Societatis, non vero uxoribus, quæ tamen non minori zelo in bonum Societatis operam suam impendunt.

some of the Indulgences already granted to definite persons.

For that purpose, they humbly lay before you:

1. That according to the Briefs of the 1st January, 1845, the 18th March, 1853, and the 13th September, 1859, and according to the rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences of the 17th July, 1886, the Plenary Indulgences granted for the four principal feasts of this Society are subject to various conditions, which very many of the Members either do not correctly understand, or are unable to fulfill on the day fixed, so that they are frequently in danger of not gaining the Indulgences in question.

2. That it appears from the Brief of the 5th of September, 1873, that certain Indulgences were granted to the fathers and mothers of Members, but not to their wives, who nevertheless contribute no less zealously to the welfare of the Society.

His mature perpensis Præses et Consultores generales Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo S. V. humiliter exorant quatenus:

1°. Plenariam Indulgentiam in quatuor diebus, festis principalibus jam concessas, lucrari valeant vel dictis diebus, vel uno ex septem continuis immediate eas sequentibus firma manente facultate ex Brevi diei 18 Martii 1853, lucrandi Indulgentiam plenarium pro die festo Immaculate Conceptionis B. V. Mariæ concessam, die etiam translatæ solemnitatis;

2°. Præfati Sodales, ad sacram synaxim accedere valeant in missa cui una simul ipsi intersunt sive in eadem ecclesia, vel capella, sive in pluribus particulari Concilio uniuscujusque civitatis ad hoc designatis;

Having maturely weighed these considerations, the President and the members of the Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul humbly implore Your Holiness:

1. That the Plenary Indulgences already granted for the four principal feasts of the Society may be gained either on the aforesaid days, or on one of the seven days immediately following them, the privilege remaining in force according to the terms of the Brief of the 18th March, 1853, of gaining the Plenary Indulgence granted for the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the B. V. Mary, also on the day to which the solemnity is transferred;

2. That Members may approach the Holy Table at the Mass at which they assist in common, either in the same church or chapel, or in several churches or chapels assigned for this purpose by the Particular Council

3°. Pariter memorati sodales Cœtui generali, cui interesse tenentur adlucrandas Indulgentiam, eidem assistere valeant vel pridie diei festi tempore vespertino, vel ipso die festo, vel uno ex septem continuis illam immediate sequentibus;

4°. Tandem sodales, qui gravi morbo laborantes, vel infirma valetudine detenti impedientur quominus missam in communi audiant, vel Cœtui generali intersint lucrari possint Indulgentias concessas sodalibus adimplendo injuncta eisdem a cujuslibet eorum confessario alia pia opera, quæ ipsi pro viribus præstare poterunt loco earum conditionum, quæ pro acquirendis præfatis Indulgentiis præstare tenebantur;

5°. Indulgentiæ ex Brevi, 5 Septembris 1873, concessæ extendantur ad Sodalium uxores sub iisdem conditionibus.

of each town;

3. That members may hold the General Meeting which they are obliged to attend in order to gain the Indulgence, either on the evening preceding the feast, or on the feast itself, or on one of the seven days immediately following it;

4. Finally that Members who, on account of serious illness, or delicate health, are prevented from hearing the Mass in common, or attending the General Meeting, may gain the Indulgences granted to the Members, by performing some other works of piety enjoined on each by his confessor, and which they will perform as far as their strength will permit, in place of the conditions they would otherwise be bound to fulfill to gain the Indulgences in question;

5. That the Indulgences granted by the Brief of the 5th September, 1873, be extended under the same conditions to the

Ex Audientia Sanctissimi diei 30 Januarii 1888.

Sanctissimus Dnus Nr Leo Papa XIII, benigne annuit pro gratia in omnibus juxta preces. Præsenti *in perpetuum* valituro absque ulla Brevis expeditione. Contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus. Datum Romæ ex Secretaria S. Congregationis Indulgentiis sacrisque Reliquis præpositæ die 30 Januarii 1888.

✠ Cajetanus,
Card. Aloisi Masella,
Præf.
✠ A., Episcopus Oensis,
Secretarius.

Visum et recognitum Parisiis, die 11 Martii 1888.

M. d'Hulst,
Vic.-Gen.

wives of the Members.

In audience with His Holiness of the 30th January, 1888.

Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII has graciously granted the petition in its entirety, this present grant will avail in perpetuity without the issue of any Brief notwithstanding anything whatsoever to the contrary.

Given at Rome at the Office of the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics, 30th January, 1888.

✠Cajétan,
Card. Aloisi Masella,
Prefect.
✠ A., Bishop of Oea,
Secretary.

Revised and approved, Paris, 11th March, 1888.

M. d'Hulst,
Vicar-General.

RESCRIPT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIII

Granting Indulgences to the Patronages in Connection With the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Beatissime Pater,

Ad pedes Sanctitatis Vestræ humiliter provoluti, præses generalis et consultores generales societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo Sanctitati Vestræ exponunt eadem societatem hodiedum non tantum coalescere ex sodalibus, qui pietatis operibus, vulgo *Conferences* nuncupatis sedulam navant operam, sed etiam ex sociis qui alia promovent charitatis opera, quæ temporum circumstantiis apprime respondent et patrociniorum nomine vulgo *Patronages* donantur. Opera vero, quæ a sodalibus prædictis exercentur hæc præcipua adnumerantur, nimirum: 1°. adducendi pueros ad ecclesiam parochialem; 2°. instituendi scholas ve-

Most Holy Father,

Humbly prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, the President General and the members of the Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul wish to make known to your Holiness that the Society is now constituted not only of members zealously devoted to the works of piety, commonly known as *Conferences,* but also of associates who labor to promote other charitable works, particularly suited to the needs of the times, and generally known under the name of *Patronages.* Of the good works practised by the said associates, the following are the chief: 1. Conducting children to their parish church; 2. establishing Sunday

spertinas dominicales; 3°. fovendi alumnos scholarum christianarum solemnibus incitamentis; 4°. docendi christianam catechesim alumnos, qui laicas scholas adire coguntur; 5°. in tuto collocandi adolescentes, qui tirocinium propriæ artis ineunt; 6°. recipiendi aliquo hospitio pueros parentibus orbatos ut ibi religione ac bonis artibus imbuantur. Immo hoc pium opus Patrociniorum sibi proponit, quotiescumque r e r u m angustiæ id non prohibent, stabiliendi præfata pia opera in grandibus ædibus, ad quas accedunt pueri, tirones, operarii, adolescentes, et in quibus etiam cœtus fiunt speciales pro patribus familias. Plures interdum harum ædium mandantur curæ Fratrum Instituti S. Vincentii a Paulo, quorum zelus in evangalizandis operariis jamdiu innotuit.

schools;[1] 3. encouraging the pupils of the Christian schools by special incitements to work; 4. teaching Christian doctrine to children who are forced to attend secular schools; 5. procuring safe lodgings for trade apprentices; 6. placing orphans in an institution where they may receive a religious training and learn a useful trade. Furthermore, the pious work of the Patronages purposes, whenever its funds so permit, establishing the aforesaid good works in extensive premises for the accommodation of children, apprentices, w o r k m e n, and youths, and in which also special meetings take place for the fathers of families. Several of these houses are in charge of the institute of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, whose zeal in evangelizing the working classes has long been known.

1 *Beringer*, 1916, edition has *Sunday Schools;* the Latin text has evening schools.

Quæ cum ita sint, oratores humiliter rogant sanctitatem vestram, ut Rectoribus piorum operum Patrociniorum, decreto Concilii generalis societati S. Vincentii a Paulo unitorum, immo Rectorum cooperatoribus sive activis, sive honorariis, nec non pueris, tironibus, operariis omnibus varias artes exercentibus, qui in album dictorum Patrociniorum erunt inscripti, ad incrementum pietatis nec non zeli in promovendis præfatis piis operibus, indulgentiæ concedantur uti infra:

I. *Indulgentia plenaria.* Rectoribus pii operis Patrociniorum eorumque cooperatoribus sive activis, sive honorariis, pueris, tironibus operariisque universis sub opere Patrociniorum receptis diebus sequentibus: 1°. die, quo ipsi præfato pio operi nomen dederint, vel in ejusdem pii operis tutelam recipientur; 2°. die festo ti-

In this condition of things your petitioners humbly pray your Holiness to grant the indulgences hereinafter mentioned to the Directors of the Patronages, united by a degree of the Council General to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, to the co-operators, whether active or honorary, of the Directors, and to the children, apprentices, and all the workingmen of various crafts who will have their names entered in the books of the said Patronages, that their piety and zeal in furthering the aforesaid pious works may be increased.

I. *A Plenary Indulgence* to the Directors of the Patronages, to their co-operators both active and honorary, to the children, apprentices, and workingmen of all kinds received into the work of the Patronages on the following days: 1st, the day on which they so gave their name to the aforesaid good work, or are received under its

tulari pii operis in qualibet diœcesi ab Ordinario rite adsignato; 3°. die festo Immaculatæ Conceptionis Beatæ Mariæ Virginis; 4°. die festo Patrocinii S. Josephi, sponsi ejusdem Beatæ Mariæ Virginis; 5°. S. Vincentii a Paulo, dummodo dictis diebus vere pœnitentes, confessi ac sacra communione refecti aliquam ecclesiam, vel publicum oratorium devote visitaverint ibique pias ad Deum preces effuderint ad mentem Sanctitatis Vestræ; 6°. in mortis articulo omnibus de quibus supra, ne non eorum consanguineis usque ad primum gradum itemque benefactoribus pii operis Patrociniorum, si uti supra dispositi, vel saltem c o n t r i t i sanctissimum Jesu nomen ore, sin minus corde, devote invocaverint; 7°. Rectoribus eorumque cooperatoribus quater in anno diebus ab Ordinario semel tantum designandis, si dictis diebus de more dispositi præfata peregerint si-

protection; 2d, the feast day, regularly appointed in each diocese by the Ordinary, of the patron saint of the pious work; 3d, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary; 4th, on the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary; 5th, on the feast of St. Vincent de Paul; provided that on the said days, being truly contrite, and having gone to Confession and Communion, they devoutly visit a church or a public oratory, and there offer fervent prayers to Almighty God for the intentions of your Holiness; 6th, at the moment of their death to all those above mentioned, to their relations to the first degree and to the benefactors of the pious work of the Patronages, if the conditions already indicated be verified or if at least being truly contrite, they invoke the Most Holy Name of Jesus with their lips or that not

mulque per anni cursum tribus vicibus quolibet mense cœtibus consilii interfuerint.

II. *Indulgentia Septem annorum totidemque quadragenarum:* 1°. omnibus, de quibus in precibus, singulis vicibus quibus interfuerint sacrosancto missæ sacrificio in suffragium Sodalium, id est Rectorum eorumque cooperatorum, puerorum, tironum, seu operariorum omnium sub pio opere Patrociniorum receptorum celebrando itemque; 2°. singulis vicibus quibus sociorum cadavera ad sepulturam, aliquam precem recitantes, comitati fuerint; 3°. Rectoribus

being possible invoke it in their hearts; 7th, to the Directors and their fellow laborers four times in the year, on days to be appointed, once for all, by the Ordinary, if on the said days, having the necessary dispositions, they comply with the aforesaid conditions, and that also in the course of the year they shall have attended the meetings of the Council three times each month.

II. *An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines:* 1st, to all those mentioned in the petition, every time they assist at the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass said for the associates, that is, the Directors and their co-operators, for the children, apprentices, and all workingmen received into the pious work of the Patronages; 2d, every time they attend the funeral of the associates and recite some prayer; 3d, to the Directors of the said work and to their co-operators as well as to

dicti operis et ipsorum cooperatoribus nec non pueris, tironibus, operariis, omnibus varias artes exercentibus in Patrocinium receptis, singulis vicibus, quibus cœtibus in mense habere solitis interfuerint, aliqua eorumdem initio et fine adhibita prece.

Quas omnes et singulas indulgentias oratores Sanctitatem Vestram exorant, ut benigne velit declarare applicabiles animabus igne purgatorii detentis.

Demum preces admovent ad Sanctitatem Vestram, ut pia opera Patrociniorum in singulis diœcesibus de consensu Ordinariorum erecta vel erigenda et ex decreto Consilii generalis Societati S. Vincentii a Paulo unita eo ipso gaudere valeant indulgentiis a Sanctitate Vestra superius expostulatis.

Et Deus . . .

Sanctissimus Dominus Noster Papa Leo XIII, in audientia habita die 15 Martii 1890, ab infra

all the children, apprentices, workmen of various crafts received in the Patronages, every time they shall attend the usual meetings held during the month, and offer a prayer at the beginning and at the close of the meeting.

Your petitioners implore your Holiness to deign to declare all and each of these indulgences applicable to the souls in purgatory.

Finally, they pray your Holiness that the Patronages founded or to be founded (in the several dioceses) with the consent of the Ordinaries and united to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul by a decree of the Council General, may thereby enjoy the indulgences solicited of your Holiness.

And that God . . .

Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII, in the audience given on the 15th March, 1890, to the undersigned

scripto Secretario S. Congregationis Indulgentiis sacrisque Reliquiis præpositæ benigne annuit pro gratia in omnibus justa preces. Præsenti *in perpetuum* valituro absque ulla Brevis expeditione. Contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus.

Datum Romæ ex Secretaria ejusdem S. Congregationis die 15 Martii 1890.

C. Card. CRISTOFORI,
Præfectus.
✠ ALEXANDER,
Archiepiscopus Nicopolitan. Secret.

Visum et recognitum Parisiis, die 18 Junii, 1890.

CARON,
Vic. generalis.

Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics granted all the favors sought. These presents will be available *forever* without any issue of a B r i e f, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

Given at Rome, from the Office of the Secretary of the said Congregation, on the 15th March, 1890.

C. Card. CRISTOFORI,
Prefect.
✠ ALEXANDER,
Archbishop of Nicopolis, Secretary.

Revised and approved, Paris, 18th June, 1890.

H. CARON,
Vicar-General.

RESCRIPT OF OUR HOLY FATHER, POPE LEO XIII

Granting an Indulgence for Extraordinary General Meetings

Sanctissimus Dominus Noster Leo Papa XIII, in audientia habita die 21 Maii 1892, ab infrascripto Secretario S. Congregationis Indulgentiis Sacrisque Reliquiis præpositæ omnibus, de quibus in precibus, benigne tantum concessit Indulgentiam septem annorum totidemque quadragenarum semel lucrandum die quo ipsi adstiterint Cœtibus generalibus sive annuis sive extraordinariis unius vel etiam plurium simul Diœcesium, quique, præter illos haberi solent, qui jam quater in anno celebrantur statis diebus festis aut uno die infra eorumdem festorum octiduum, simulque aliquam precem juxta mentem Sanctitatis suæ effuderint.

In the audience of His Holiness on the 21st May, 1892, given to the Secretary mentioned here below of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and of the Holy Relics, our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, deigned to grant to all those indicated in the Petition an Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines to be gained only once, on the day they shall attend the General Meetings, either annual or extraordinary, of one or of several dioceses together (which meetings are generally held in addition to those which have taken place four times a year on the feast days indicated, or on one of the days within the octave of those same feasts), and on which they shall also pray for the intention of His Holiness.

Præsenti *in perpetuum* valituro absque ulla Brevis expeditione. Contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus.

Datum Romæ ex Secretaria ejusdem S. Congregationis die 21 Maii 1892.

Card. SERAFINI,
Præfectus.
✠ ALEXANDER,
Archiep. Nicopolitan,
Secret.

Visum et recognitum Parisiis, die 27 Augusti 1892.

H. CARON, *Vicar. Gen.*

This present grant to avail in perpetuity to issue of a Brief anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, at the Office of the Secretary of the same Sacred Congregation, 21st May, 1892.

Card. SERAFINI,
Prefect.
✠ ALEXANDER,
Archbishop of Nicopolis,
Secretary.

Revised and approved, Paris, 27th August, 1892.

H. CARON, *Vicar-General.*

DECISION OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF INDULGENCES

Extending during the Octave the power of gaining the Indulgences granted to the Works of Patronage for the Feasts of the Immaculate Conception, of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Vincent de Paul.

Beatissime Pater,

Præses generalis et consultores generales Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo Parisiis existentis ad pedes Sanctitatis Vestræ provoluti exponunt per Rescriptum S. Congregationis Indulgentiarum sub die 15 Martii 1890, concessam fuisse plenarium Indulgentiam Rectoribus Pii Operis Patrociniorum quod eadem Societas promovet, eorumque co-operatoribus sive activis sive honorariis, pueris tironibus operariisque universis sub opere Patrociniorum receptis nonnullis infra annum diebus et præsertim duobus festis nempe Immaculatæ Conceptionis Beatæ Mariæ Virginis et S.

Most Holy Father,

Humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, the President General and the members of the Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, of which the meeting-place is in Paris, set forth that by the Rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, bearing date the 15th March, 1890, a Plenary Indulgence was granted to the Directors of the pious Work of the Patronages "promoted by this Society" to their co-operators, either active or honorary, to all the apprentices and workmen admitted into the Work of the Patronages, to be gained on certain days of the year, and especially

Vincentii a Paulo. In Galliis vero, quam hujusmodi dies festi incidant in dies profestos, impossibile fere est, ut operarii præsertim et alii Christi fideles qui sub memorato pio opere Patrociniorum recipiuntur adire valeant Ecclesiam peracturi sacramentalem Confessionem et recepturi sacram Synaxim ad effectum lucrandi Indulgentias. Hinc oratores admovent preces Sanctitati Vestræ ut Indulgentia plenaria præfatis festivitatibus adnexa acquiri possit at omnibus quibus est concessa vel in dictis festivitatibus vel in uno ex septem diebus eas immediate s e q u e n t i b u s uniuscujusque a r b i t r i o eligendo, ceteris servatis conditionibus ad acquirendam plenariam Indulgentiam præscriptis.

Quam gratiam,

Vigore specialium facultatum a Sanctissimo Domino nostro Leone Papa XIII, tributarum, S. Congregatio Indulgen-

on the two feasts of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, and of St. Vincent de Paul. But in France, when these feasts fall on a week day, it is almost impossible for workmen especially, and for the other Faithful admitted into the above-mentioned pious Work of the Patronages, to go to church in order to confess and to receive Holy Communion so as to gain the Indulgence. Therefore the petitioners humbly implore Your Holiness, that the Plenary Indulgences granted for the aforesaid feasts may be gained by all those to whom it is granted, either on the same feasts, or on one of the seven days immediately following them, at the choice of each person, by fulfilling the o t h e r conditions prescribed for gaining a P l e n a r y Indulgence. Which favor, "In virtue of s p e c i a l faculties granted," by our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII,

tiis Sacrisque Reliquiis præposita benigne annuit pro gratia juxta preces. Præsenti *in perpetuum* valituro absque ulla Brevis expeditione, contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus.

Datum Romæ ex Secretaria ejusdem S. Congregationis die 11 Maii 1892.

Card. SERAFINI,
Præfectus.
✠ ALEXANDER,
Archiep. Nicopolitan,
Secret.

Visum et recognitum Parisiis, die 29 Augusti 1892.

H. CARON, *Vicar. Gen.*

the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics has kindly conceded according to the request. These presents to hold for all times without any issue of Brief, anything whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, at the Office of the Secretary of the same Sacred Congregation, 11th May, 1892.

Card. SERAFINI,
Prefect.
✠ ALEXANDER,
Archbishop of Nicopolis,
Secretary.

Examined and approved, Paris, 29th August, 1892.

H. CARON, *Vicar-General.*

RESCRIPT OF OUR HOLY FATHER, POPE PIUS X

Most Holy Father:

Humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, the President General and the Members of the Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, whose headquarters are at Paris, solicit Your Holiness: 1st. That the Provincial Meetings, annual or extraordinary, may in future obtain a Plenary Indulgence, on condition that those attending them receive Holy Communion at the Mass heard in common, and pray for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff; 2d. That the Plenary Indulgence granted by a Brief dated the 13th September, 1859, to the Faithful assisted and relieved by the Society, provided that, having been to confession and Holy Communion, they visit a church or a public oratory and pray there for the usual intentions on the feast day of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin (19th March), may be also gained, on the same conditions, on the Feast of St. Joseph (Third Sunday after Easter), or within the octave of one or other Festival.

And that God . . .

July 17, 1913.

Our Most Holy Father Pius X, by Divine Providence Pope, in audience granted to the Reverend Assessor of the Holy Office, graciously granted all the favors sought.

These presents will be available forever, without any issue of a Brief, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

M. Card. Rampolla,

✠ *D. Archbishop of Seleuc., Ads. S. O.*

It will be seen by reading the foregoing Briefs and Rescripts that the Sovereign Pontiffs have graciously conferred on the Council General the power of making Conferences participators in the Indulgences conceded, by aggregating these Conferences to the Society.

As the Council General is thus commissioned, it is necessary for the good working of the Society and the maintenance of its spirit, that Conferences which desire, for particular reasons, to obtain any modifications in the conditions of the Briefs and Rescripts, should address themselves to this Council, for the transmission of their request. They will thus avoid soliciting favors already possessed by the Society, a thing which sometimes happens through carelessness. Moreover, as our interests are represented before the Sacred Congregation by the Cardinal Protector of the Society, it is to be desired that such petitions be addressed to him by the Council General, as His Eminence wishes.

INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING INDULGENCES

I

On Indulgences in General

FAITH teaches us that after we have obtained in the Sacrament of Penance the remission of our sins committed after Baptism—in so far, at least, as regards eternal punishment—in most cases there still remains due to divine justice a temporal reparation called satisfaction. The necessity of this satisfaction after forgiveness of sin is acknowledged and admitted by all Catholic theologians and the works by which we offer it to God are prayer, fasting, almsgiving and submission to the Divine Will in all the troubles and afflictions of life. Nevertheless, as these works of atonement for various reasons may be, and often are, insufficient, the Church infallible in the knowledge and exercise of her spiritual powers, comes to the assistance of her children. Making use of the authority derived from her Divine Founder, she remits, wholly or in part, but on certain conditions carefully determined

by herself the temporal punishment that yet remains to be suffered in this world or the next.

The remission of this temporal punishment due to sins already absolved from the penalty of eternal damnation, which the Church grants independently of the Sacrament of Penance, is called an *Indulgence*.

Indulgences do not release any one from the obligation of confessing his sins, receiving absolution and doing penance; on the contrary, they imply that all these things have been already done, and only make up for the deficiency of any atonement we ourselves may offer, by applying to our souls the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints.

The infinite satisfaction offered by the Son of God and the Blessed Virgin, as also by various Saints who during their lifetime have more than atoned for their own sins, form, according to Pope Clement VI *a real treasure,* which increases every day by the accumulation of new spiritual riches, and of which the Church has been divinely instituted the Supreme and Exclusive dispenser. It is from this treasure the Church draws the Indulgences which she daily applies to the Faithful, and which are destined to complete or replace the

satisfaction still due from them to Divine Justice.

Indulgences granted by the Church are either *Plenary* or *Partial*. They are *Plenary* when they remit the whole of the punishment due to sin, provided always the blot or guilt of sin has been effaced; *Partial* when they only remit a part of the temporal punishment due to sin, as for instance an indulgence of seven years or seven quarantines.

By thus granting Indulgences for a fixed number of days, weeks or years, the Church intends not to abridge by such a time the pains of purgatory, but to remit the amount of temporal punishment which would have been remitted by the same number of days, weeks, or years of the Canonical Penance, as formerly enjoined by the *Penitential Canons*.

Both Plenary and Partial Indulgences may be applied to souls in Purgatory, but only when the Briefs granting them so authorize. Still the Church does not and cannot apply them directly to the dead, over whom she no longer possesses any jurisdiction; she grants them to the Faithful still living. These latter fulfill the works imposed, and present the atoning value of the indulgences to God, by way of suffrage for the dead: praying Him to accept it in total or partial remission of the temporal

punishment that may yet remain to be suffered by them.

That these Indulgences are acceptable to God and beneficial to souls in Purgatory is affirmed by all Catholic theologians. But how far and in what degree God applies them to the souls we wish to relieve is a question which we cannot decide. This application depends for its extent upon the Sovereign Will of God Who, in this case, has not spoken to us by the infallible sentence of His Church, as He has done in regard to indulgences for the living.

II

Conditions Requisite for Gaining Indulgences

The conditions prescribed for gaining indulgences relate both to the dispositions of the Faithful and to the works required.

On the part of the Faithful two dispositions are necessary: to be in a *state of Grace,* and to have the *intention* of gaining the indulgence.

I. That he who is, and perseveres in a state of mortal sin, cannot gain Indulgences, admits of no doubt. Since he is liable to eternal punishment, while he remains in that state, he can by no means obtain remission of the temporal punishment due to sins that have neither been confessed nor absolved. An affection for

venial sin does not prevent us from gaining indulgences, which in this case may be applied to other sins already remitted. Still these indulgences cannot be Plenary, because the temporal punishment due to sin, even venial, cannot be remitted, if the sin itself has not already been remitted; and this remission cannot take place while we still retain an affection for sin.

II. The intention requisite for gaining Indulgences may be made once for all in the morning and applied to all good works to be performed in the day, and to which Indulgences are attached.

III. Concerning the works to be performed and the way in which they may be performed, one must exclusively abide by the terms of the Briefs or Rescripts granting Indulgences.

III

Indulgences Granted to the Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, to Its Benefactors, to Its Poor, and to the Fathers and Mothers of Its Members

Indulgences Granted to Members of the Society

I. A Plenary Indulgence may be gained once a month by members of the Council Gen-

eral and by members of Superior and Central Councils and of the Particular Councils of Paris and of other cities, provided that, being truly contrite and having gone to Confession and received Holy Communion, they shall attend all the meetings of their Council, or at least three of the four monthly meetings.

II. A like Indulgence is granted to all the active members, not excepting the above mentioned members of Councils who may have gained the Indulgence mentioned in the preceding paragraph, provided that, being truly contrite and having gone to Confession and received Holy Communion, they shall assist at all the meetings of their Conference or at least three of the weekly meetings held in each month.

III. A Plenary Indulgence is granted to all, who being truly contrite and having confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, shall be admitted to the various active grades of aspirant member, ordinary member, member of a Particular Council, and member of the Council General, on the days upon which they are admitted to each of these grades.

IV. All the members, active or honorary, may gain a Plenary Indulgence on the day of the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the

Blessed Virgin, on the First Sunday of Lent,[1] on the Second Sunday after Easter, and on the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, or on any one of the seven days immediately following these feasts respectively. However, according to the terms of the Brief of March 18, 1853, the Plenary Indulgence granted for the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may also be gained on the day to which the celebration of this feast is transferred. These Indulgences are obtainable on condition that the members, having confessed their sins, receive Holy Communion at the Mass heard by them *in common,* either in the same church or chapel or in several churches or chapels, appointed for that intention by the Particular Council of each town, and that they attend the General Meeting which takes place at the same time and which may be held either in the afternoon of the day before the feast or on the feast itself, or on one of the seven days immediately following it, not necessarily the same as that on which the Mass is celebrated.[2]

V. Members who are prevented by serious illness or infirmity from hearing the Mass *in*

1 **By the Brief of Sept. 13, 1859, the Indulgence of the First Monday of Lent is transferred to the First Sunday of Lent.**

2 **Rescript of January 30, 1888, and letter from the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences of July 15, 1888.**

common or attending the General Meeting, may gain the Indulgences granted to Members by performing some other pious work which shall be assigned to each by his Confessor, and which, having regard to their strength, they may substitute for the conditions which they were bound to fulfill in order to gain the Indulgences.

VI. A Plenary Indulgence is granted at the moment of death to members of the Society who, having, if possible, confessed their sins with true contrition, or, at least, being sincerely penitent, shall devoutly invoke the Name of Jesus, with their lips, if able, and if not, in a resigned and willing spirit accept death from God's hand, as the punishment of sin.

VII. A Plenary Indulgence is granted on the eighth of March, the feast of St. John of God, to the members who visit the sick either in the hospitals or in their own homes.[3]

VIII. An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines is granted to all the active members each time that, with at least contrite hearts, they assist at a Conference meeting, visit a poor family, or the schools or workshops of the poor, or perform any other good

[3] **Rescript of January 13, 1877, obtained from the application of the Superior General of the Brothers of St. John of God (See *Bulletin* for May, 1877, Paris, and same number of the *Bulletin* published at Dublin, p. 133).**

work in accordance with the spirit of the Society. They can also gain this Indulgence each time that they assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass whenever it is celebrated for the repose of the soul of any associate, or accompany the remains of the poor to Christian burial.

All these Indulgences may be gained by associates living in places where no Conference has as yet been established, provided they perform the usual works of Charity and fulfill the other prescribed conditions.

IX. When the Conferences have Retreats or courses of Spiritual Exercises, a Plenary Indulgence is granted to all the members who assist devoutly at all the exercises, provided that being truly penitent and having confessed their sins, they receive the Holy Communion at the Mass on the last day of the Retreat and pray for the concord among Christian princes, the extirpation of heresies, and the exaltation of our Holy Mother the Church. An Indulgence of 100 days is granted to those, who, being truly contrite, follow a part of the Exercises and pray for the above intentions.

X. An Indulgence of 300 days is granted to all the members of the Society each time that, with a contrite heart, they recite, in any language, the prayer of the Society: "We give Thee thanks, O Lord."

These Indulgences are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

Indulgences Granted to the Benefactors of the Society

I. A Plenary Indulgence may be gained once a month by each and every one of the faithful of either sex, who regularly gives a fixed and determined alms to the Council General, on condition of contrition, confession, and Holy Communion.

II. An Indulgence of seven years and seven times forty days may be gained once a month by all the faithful of either sex, who in like manner send a fixed alms to the Particular Councils established by the Council General in any province or town.

III. An Indulgence of one year may be gained, once a month, by all the faithful of either sex, who, by subscription or in any other way, undertake to give regularly a fixed alms to the Conferences approved by the Council General, or by the Particular Councils authorized by it to do so.

IV. An Indulgence of seven years and of seven quarantines may be gained once a month by all the faithful of either sex on the days upon which they shall have made a Collection

for the Council General or for any Particular Council.

V. An Indulgence of 300 days is granted to the benefactors of the Society every time that, with a contrite heart, they recite the prayer of the Society: "We give Thee thanks, O Lord."

VI. A Plenary Indulgence at the moment of death is also granted to the benefactors of the Society on the same conditions as to the members.

Indulgences Granted to the Poor Under the Care of the Society

I. The Brief of September 13, 1859, completed with the Rescript of July 17, 1913, grants to all the poor of either sex, to whom the Society of St. Vincent de Paul gives assistance, a Plenary Indulgence on Christmas Day, on the Feast of St. Joseph, and on the last day of the annual Retreat, provided that, being truly contrite and having confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, they devoutly visit any church or public oratory and pray therein for concord among Christian princes, for the extirpation of heresy and the exaltation of our Holy Mother the Church; on the two feast days the visit to the church may be made at any time between first Vespers and the end

of the feast; and on the last day of the Retreat the visit must be made between sunrise and sunset.

II. A Plenary Indulgence is granted on the eighth of March, the feast of St. John of God, to the sick assisted by the Conferences in the hospitals.[4]

III. The Brief of September 13, 1859, grants an Indulgence of 100 days to all whom the Society relieves, provided that, with a contrite heart, they recite alone, or with their family, the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary*, adding, in any language, the following invocation: *"Queen, conceived without sin, pray for us; St. Vincent de Paul, pray for us."*

These Indulgences are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

Indulgences Granted to the Fathers, Mothers and Wives of Members of the Society. (Brief of September 5, 1873, and Rescript of January 30, 1888.)

I. A Plenary Indulgence is granted at the moment of death to all and every one of the fathers, mothers and wives of members of the Society, who being truly penitent have confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, or, if unable to do so, at least with

[4] Rescript of January 13, 1877.

true contrition invoke the Most Holy Name of Jesus with their lips or if that be not possible invoke it in their hearts.

II. A Plenary Indulgence to the same, provided they attend every day at the Society's Retreat, and on the concluding day, being truly penitent, and having confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and pray devoutly for concord among Christian Princes, the extirpation of heresies, and the exaltation of our Holy Mother, the Church.

III. An Indulgence of 100 days to the same, provided that they assist on any day with devotion at the above-mentioned spiritual exercises.

IV. An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines is also granted to the same as often as they assist at any religious office celebrated for the soul of any deceased member of the Society, or accompany the mortal remains of the poor to Christian burial, or do any other pious or charitable work in accordance with the practice of the Society.

All these Indulgences are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

Examined and approved:

H. PELGÉ, *Vicar General.*

Paris, August 11, 1888.

Indulgences Granted to the Managing Committees of the Patronages United [5] to Our Society and to the Other Members of Those Works. (Rescript of March 15, 1890.)

I

The Directors of the Patronages and their co-operators, whether active or honorary, the children, apprentices and workmen may gain, on the usual condition, a Plenary Indulgence:

1. On the day of their admission into the work, as soon as the work has been affiliated to the Society by the Council General;

2. On the day of the patronal feast of the work, regularly fixed in each diocese by the Ordinary;

3. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin;

4. On the Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph;

5. On the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul;

6. In articulo mortis; the Plenary Indulgence is applicable, in that case, not only to the members of the work, but also to their

[5] **Applications for the union of patronages to the Society, as well as for the aggregation of Conferences are to be sent to the Council general, which is entitled to declare that union.**

parents and to the benefactors of the same work.

7. Finally that same Indulgence may be gained by the directors of patronages and their co-operators four times in the year, on the days fixed by the Ordinary, once for all, if, having on the aforesaid days fulfilled the usual required conditions, they have attended, in the course of the year, three times a month the meetings of the Committee of the work.

II

An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines is also granted to the associates:

1. Every time they shall assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass celebrated for one of them;

2. Every time they shall accompany the mortal remains of their associates to the grave, and recite a few prayers;

3. Every time also they shall attend the meetings, which it is customary to hold in the month, and add some prayer at the beginning and the end.

Finally, all these Indulgences, and each one in particular, are declared applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

By the Rescript of May 11, 1892, the Plen-

ary Indulgence granted for the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and for the feast of St. Vincent de Paul may be gained within the Octave, that is to say, on one of the seven days immediately following those feasts.

Indulgences Granted to the Members Attending Extraordinary General Meetings

A Plenary Indulgence may be granted by all the members, whether active or honorary, attending Provincial meetings, of one or several dioceses together, provided that they receive Holy Communion at the Mass heard in common and pray for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff.[7]

The members of the Society may also gain an Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines on the day they shall attend the General Meetings, either annual or extraordinary, of one or several dioceses together and held generally in addition to those which have already taken place four times a year, provided that they pray for the intention of His Holiness.[8]

7 Rescript of July 17, 1913.

8 Rescript of May 21, 1892.

THE RULE
WITH
EXPLANATORY NOTES
UPON THE
ARTICLES

General Regulations

Article 1. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul receives into its ranks all Christian young men who desire to unite in prayer and to participate in the same works of charity, in whatever country they may happen to reside.

This article, the object of which is to set forth the aim and the nature of the Society, contains many points of the highest importance.

For young men.—Firstly, it recalls to mind that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has been founded *by young men and for them;* it is with a view of preserving them from the dangers of every kind that surround them at the commencement of their career, that Conferences have been organized; and if, at a later time, men of more advanced age have come to join them, and to bring to them the tribute of their experience, we should not be the less mindful of the original aim of the Society, and we should seek, as much as possible, to attract to it young men, those especially who, far from their families, are in need of Christian surroundings to enable them to persevere in good.—*(Circular of November 1, 1851.)*

For men only.—It results, moreover, from this article, that the Conferences are intended for men only, that women cannot take part in them, either as active or as honorary members. By a natural consequence, the works of women, although founded upon a rule analogous to that of the men, cannot be aggregated to the Society. Conferences may have charitable relations with them, may adopt the cases of the poor whom they recommend, and may recommend others to them in turn; but they must keep entirely separate their government, their resources, their meetings. It will be seen further on that women can become benefactresses of the Society, and in that relation participate in numerous Indulgences.

Must be practical Catholics.—The article adds that the members must be *Catholic,* and the 18th Article confirms it by adding that "each member should be careful to introduce into the Society only those who will edify their fellow members or be edified by them and who will endeavor to love each other, and the poor like brothers." The Council General, interpreting the Rule, has always understood that this condition could not be considered as fulfilled but among men, Christians not only in feeling but in practice, fulfilling without failure all the duties prescribed by the Church, and especially the Paschal duty. On this subject almost all the *Presidents' Addresses* may be consulted, in particular those of *July 14, 1841,* and of *May 31, 1846.* One of the aims of the Society being to make the poor better Christians, how can any one do this if he is not a practical Christian himself, and how can he recommend the performance of duties which he himself does not discharge?

Mutual edification. First aim: Zeal for salvation of souls.—It is, also, to be remarked that the primary object which the Society proposes to its members, is

their own edification. If they meet together, if they visit the poor, the first object is to improve themselves *by a union in prayer*. The first aim of the Conferences is not, then, the alleviation, very praiseworthy no doubt, but purely human, of the sufferings of the poor; their aim is zeal for the salvation of souls, and in particular for the souls of the members themselves. This is a point which must never be lost sight of, for numerous consequences spring from it, especially in the selection of the works to be undertaken by Conferences, which ought all to tend towards the sanctification of the members engaged in them.

Charitable works are means to the end.—Still, if charitable works are not the primary object of the Society, they are the principal means made use of to attain that object. There are some associations which are conducive to the sanctification of those engaged in them, such as pious congregations, by their frequent and prolonged prayers; there are others that strive to attain the same end by charitable exercises and by penance united to prayer, such as the Third Orders. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has not so high an aim; it does not aspire to be a congregation, a confraternity, a Third Order; it is only a pious assembly of Christians, who wish to put their life and their habits under the shelter of charity. To ask more for it would be to alter its character and its institution.

Members should be able to help the poor.—The Council General has been consulted several times to know if it were expedient to admit as members persons who were not above want. It has always replied in the negative *(see the Address of July 14, 1841)*. Doubtless it is not necessary to be favored by fortune in order to take part in the Society. With regard to this, much consideration must be given to the

locality in which the particular Conference accomplishes its works. For example: the conditions could not be absolutely the same in a poor country district as in a large city; but it is always of consequence that the member should be in a position to help the poor in some degree, however small, and should never have need to be himself assisted. Every one can understand the inconvenience which might arise from a contrary usage.

The last words of the article which occupies our attention, "wherever they may happen to reside," add a new feature most essential to the Society, that is, its universality. Profoundly united to the Church, its ambition is to serve it, everywhere and for ever, without distinction of race or of country, without difference of language or of government. If there be anything which can unite men by a bond at once the strongest and the purest, surely it is charity, that eternal delight of angels and of men, as St. Vincent de Paul called it.

No Charitable Work Foreign to Society

ART. 2. No work of charity should be regarded as foreign to the Society, although its special object is to visit poor families in their homes. Accordingly, its members embrace every opportunity of bringing consolation to the sick and to prisoners, of instructing poor abandoned or imprisoned children and of procuring the consolation of religion for those who need it at the hour of death.

In this is presented an application of the principle already referred to, namely, that the Society, above

all things, aims at the sanctification of its members. If, in fact, visiting poor families is its most special, indeed its fundamental work, it is because that is the work which is the most conducive to the edification of the members, and that which is most within their reach. Undoubtedly, it is very meritorious to undertake the patronage of children, or to facilitate marriages among the poor; but the exercise of these works has not the same practical effect *upon the members* as visiting the poor in their garrets, their cellars, or their destitute homes. To undertake these works, it is necessary in some measure to have carried out the visiting of the poor; otherwise, insurmountable difficulties would arise in them, were it but those of inexperience alone, and members would get a distaste for these works, whether on account of failure or because too much time was absorbed in them. On the other hand, visiting the poor attracts you, captivates you, because it always produces immediate results, material relief; it is easily practised, and requires but little time. For all these reasons, it was bound to become the favorite work of a Society composed of men who live in the world, and are engaged in numerous occupations; and this is why the Circulars constantly recommend it.

Work should be suited to special character of Society. No mission to women.—It is well to remark, also, that, if no work of charity should be regarded as foreign to the Society, this expression is always to be understood with this reservation, *that the work should be suited to the special character of the Society*. Thus it has constantly been regarded as an imperative rule, not to undertake any work relating to females, particularly such as are young and live alone. The Society leaves the care of them, as well as the patronage of girls' schools to women's associations, or to

the indefatigable zeal of the clergy. Moreover, when commencing new works, the rules of prudence should never be forgotten. It is most desirable that every Conference should exert itself to add some new work to those already in operation; but in doing so, the step should be taken without precipitation, and when the necessary means exist. Our Rule should be, neither lukewarmness nor rashness.

Formation of Conference

ART. 3. When in any town a number of young men form themselves into a branch of the Society, they meet to encourage each other in the practice of good works. This meeting is called a *Conference,* which was the name originally given to the Society itself.

Practice not discussion.—The Address of December 1, 1842, referring to the origin of the title of *Conferences* given to our meetings, which is that usually given at Paris to literary assemblies of young men, recommends most earnestly that the Society should occupy itself exclusively with *practising* charity, instead of discussing systems for the relief of the poor. It will be useful here to repeat that passage, which puts forward one of the essential points of our organization: "It is not our office to instruct each other by discourses, but to edify each other by mutual example. I entreat that we will never allow the spirit of debating, the habits of the tribune, to penetrate amongst us. We do not mean to find fault with this spirit in itself; discussion is good and necessary, when used in places and applied to subjects which need it, but our Society is a working society; it should do much, and speak

little. Let us leave to our heads, to our Councils, the troublesome task of discussing whatever is susceptible of debate; let our Conferences, as a body, keep for themselves the consoling charge of good works."

Aggregation.—Every Conference which desires to obtain admission into the Society, must solicit aggregation from the Council General, adding to its request the list of its members, an account of its first works, as well as the date of its formation, and an expression of its intention to conform to the Rules and usages of the Society. This request is forwarded directly, if the Conference be in a town where there is neither a Particular, a Central, nor a Superior Council; otherwise it is forwarded by the proper Council, which gives its opinion upon it. The Council General pronounces the aggregation, if it be advisable. By the simple fact of this aggregation the new Conference participates in the Indulgences granted by the Holy See. Without the fulfillment of this indispensable formality, it would be deprived of them.

Moreover, nothing is more useful than this organization. If there were not unity in the aggregations, the Society would be very quickly liable to become a mere agglomeration of several associations, having no common spirit, possessing an identity in name only, and in which the most experienced eye could not detect the signs of relationship. The recommendations of the different local Councils, when they exist, are also a useful precaution, since they guarantee to the Council General the good internal organization of the new Conferences, which could only be known upon the spot.

Name of Parish

ART. 4. (1) When in any town several Conferences have been established, they are

distinguished from one another by the name of the parish in which their members meet.

Particular Council

(2) Those Conferences are united by a Particular Council, which takes the name of the town where it is established.

The principle laid down by Article 4, of a parochial denomination given to the Conferences, is a result of the essentially Catholic character of the Society. As an obedient child of the Church, it attaches itself as much as possible to her imperishable hierarchy.

The Rule did not provide for the case, happily of frequent occurrence, of several Conferences existing in the same parish. It is essential to give to each of them a name which clearly designates it. With this in view the name of a person renowned for his charity or for some other virtue has sometimes been chosen. The Council General has long since made it a rule only to aggregate Conferences having the name of a saint or a blessed, or a venerable—or again of a Divine Person or of a mystery. Care should be taken, however, not to choose the name of St. Vincent de Paul, which being used by all the Conferences of the Society would not distinguish one in particular from the others.

On the other hand, when in the same town several Conferences take the name of the same saint, another appellation should be added to this name for the purpose of avoiding in ordinary conversation as well as in correspondence the confusion of one Conference with another.

It would be most desirable to refer to page 122 of the Rules and to fill in, having regard to what precedes, the statement of the information to furnish when the aggregation of a Conference is sought.

Council General

ART. 5. All the Conferences of the Society are united by a Council General.

This is the place to explain shortly the organization of the Society.

Its foundations are the Conferences, whose object is practical works.

Over the Conferences, where there are several in the same town, is a Particular Council, the constitution of which will appear further on.

Central Council.—Over the Particular Council as well as over isolated Conferences is either a Central Council or an Upper Council, embracing within its circumscription the Conferences of several dioceses, or of an entire country.

In fine, a Council General, the center of the whole Society, acting for it as a connecting link, a means of unity, and devoting the time and zeal of its members to the common interest.

Isolated Conferences.—In this way, each Conference is not isolated, and is not left to itself alone. It has not to form its rules, its traditions, without taking advice of any one; on the contrary, it forms part of a great Society, between the members of which there exists unity of heart, of mind, of customs; it rests upon the enlightened advice of the different Councils; and while, in carrying out its own works, it preserves the fullest liberty of action, it shares the benefits of a direction common to and accepted by all.

Authority of Councils.—Need it be added, that the authority of the different Councils, from the Particular Council up to the Council General, is a real authority, only because it is spontaneously accepted, and that persuasion and good example are the surest, not to say the sole means of supporting that authority? The Church, nevertheless, has wished to give strength to these ties in the manner which is the most effectual for Christians, by granting most valuable Indulgences to Conferences aggregated and to Councils instituted by the Council General. This is the object of the many Briefs and Rescripts of which the text will be found on pages 54-98.

CHAPTER I

Conferences

ART. 6. The Conferences meet upon such days and at such hours as they themselves have fixed.

The fullest latitude is allowed in this matter to the Conferences themselves, for nothing is more variable than the convenience of different localities, and it is of great importance that choice should be made of a day which is the most convenient to the greatest number; otherwise the meetings would run the risk of being little frequented, and consequently zeal and charity would relax.

Weekly meetings.—It is well to be precise upon a point to which the Council General attaches much importance, that is, the weekly periodical occurrence of the meetings. As the Rules do not lay down this period expressly, an inference has been sometimes drawn, that meetings need only take place every fort-

night or every month. Except as to rural Conferences, where, on account of the distance, difficulty of the roads, or different local circumstances, meetings every week would be at times too troublesome, the Council General has not ceased to advise the Conferences to meet every week, as has been the rule since the commencement of the Society. The object of our meetings is, as has been already said, to form, above all things, Christian relations among the members, and to strengthen them in piety by mutual good example. Now one meeting only every fortnight, and more obviously one only every month, is insufficient for such a purpose, especially when allowance must be made for the absences, more or less numerous, which members cannot avoid owing to sickness, business, or traveling. The result would be, that at the end of a year, they would scarcely have seen, scarcely have known each other, and many years may go on in this way without that Christian intimacy which the Society has in view, being formed among the members. Thus the Conferences, in which the meetings are far apart, are colder and more languishing. In the others, on the contrary, the members become more attached to each other and to the common work because they return to it more frequently; and they assist in it with greater assiduity, because that assiduity becomes more habitual, and because they feel greater satisfaction in it. Further, the interests of the poor are better cared for when meetings take place every week, and the treasury of the Conference is better supplied because the collection made often becomes of necessity more abundant. The strongest reasons concur, then, in favor of weekly meetings, and it is desirable that in towns it should be a rule without exception. But even when a departure from this custom is necessary, as in certain rural districts, it is important to note that the

visit to the poor should always be weekly. Without a visit made at least once a week, it would be almost impossible to have a constant knowledge of the wants of the poor, and to acquire an influence over them which would be salutary for the improvement of their habits.

Communication Between Conferences

ART. 7. The Conferences endeavor to communicate with each other for their mutual edification, and whenever necessary, to recommend to the kind offices of each other, either the members themselves of the Society, or other young men, or the poor families who change their places of abode.

The habit of frequent communication between Conference and Conference is one of those which has contributed most to the development of the Society, and which should be most sedulously kept up. Relations will be perhaps less intimate as the Society progresses than at the time when they were exchanged between seven or eight Conferences formed by persons all of whom were mutually acquainted; but there should not be less cordiality and confidence, because as has been said, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a ready-made friendship, and on entering into it, one comes, as it were, among a closely united family circle. It is to facilitate these familiar inter-communications that the Society has been subdivided as has been shown already. The Conferences on being formed into groups under Central Councils and Superior Councils, should consider that it is by no means intended to separate each from the common and the sole center which

is the Council General, but to bring them together one to the others; for, among so many Conferences spread over all the world, intimate relations are not possible in reality, and they can only have very rare occasions of communication; but between twenty or thirty Conferences near each other, these communications should be as frequent as they are easy.

The object of communication.—The object of this correspondence is, above all, to give mutual edification, to communicate to each other the good which each witnesses; thus the successful innovations of zeal do not remain isolated, but are propagated and thereby works become general and are multiplied. This is then a cardinal point since that which is most wanted in what is good is not that it should be practised individually, but that it should be known to all, in order that it may be practised by all those who desire to do so. These communications take place sometimes by means of the visits of members, sometimes by printed reports, or still further through the Circulars, the General Report, and the Monthly *Bulletin* of the Society. Of course, all these communications ought to be simple, modest, and should never become, either for the members or for the Society, a subject from which may be drawn any vain glory for the little good accomplished. St. Vincent de Paul desired that his missionaries should preach simply, and that they should not preach themselves, to use his own expression; with much stronger reason would he have abhorred to see those of his disciples who are the last comers and the least zealous, taking glory to themselves for some most trivial works.

Facilitates the entrance of young men. Letters of recommendation to members.—Intercommunications from Conference to Conference facilitate the introduction of young men who leave their families to settle

in a town where the Society exists. Nothing is more useful than this custom. How many young men are there who leave the paternal roof well-disposed to remain pure, chaste, religious! How many have promised it to their mothers, and have promised it to themselves! Nevertheless, no sooner are they settled in their new residence than they lose all their pious habits, and allow themselves to be guilty of misconduct. The fault is due, above all, to the isolation in which they find themselves from all pious companionship, from all Christian advice. Fortified by example, they would have maintained their rectitude; left to themselves, they fall miserably. To give to these young men, still Christians, a solid support by procuring for them pure companionship within the bosom of the Conference, by bestowing upon them encouragement, alas! too necessary, what service is not thus rendered to religion, to their families, and to themselves! Conferences are earnestly solicited to give their best attention to this, so that they will never omit to recommend to other Conferences such of their members as go away, and that they will give the most earnest welcome to young men who come to them furnished with similar recommendations, and particularly that they will surround these youths with those safeguards and those precautions with which every father would wish to surround his son.

To the poor.—As to the poor who change their place of abode, it is likewise a very laudable custom to recommend them mutually. In this way the good begun in one town may be finished in another: but care must be taken that the removal of the poor be not made inconsiderately and without a serious purpose, as is too often the case.

To workmen.—Nor should we neglect to give recommendations to workmen who are traveling in order to

improve themselves in their trades, so that they may be placed, as much as possible, in reputable houses and with honest and Christian employers.

Organization of Conferences

ART. 8. The business of each Conference is administered by the President, one or more Vice Presidents, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, who constitute the "Board" of the Conference. There is also in each Conference, if necessary, a Librarian, a Keeper of the Clothes Room, or any other officer.[1]

Article 8 enumerates the different officers of the Conferences, and it divides them into two categories: those who form the Board, to whom more particularly belongs the direction of the Conference, and those who fulfill certain accessory functions.

The Board.—The Board of the Conference has, practically, a very great importance, particularly in such Conferences as are not under a Particular Council. It has to consider carefully the principal questions which belong to the business of the Conference, to prepare the questions which are to be submitted, in order that its decisions may be made clear and discussions shortened. Although the Rule does not direct it, yet it is desirable that the meetings of the Board should be so frequent as to secure an actual efficiency; but it should be observed that, according to the spirit of the Rule, the Board has only to prepare decisions for submission to the Conference, to consider all pro-

1 Each Conference has, according to custom, a Spiritual Director, who is the Pastor of the parish, or one of his Curates. He is *ipso facto* a member of the Conference, and also of its Board.

jects carefully, and that it is for the Conference itself to decide, especially in the towns where a Particular Council is not in existence. To proceed otherwise would often be to annul the actual life of the Conference, and to take away all interest from its meetings.

The President. Mode of Election

ART. 9. The President is elected by the Conference. The other officers[2] are appointed by the President, with the advice of the Board. However, as is said further on,[3] in towns where there is a Particular Council, the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the individual Conferences, as well as the other members who compose the Particular Council, are appointed by its President.

Two cases may occur for the nomination of the President of a Conference: one, where there is but a single Conference in a town, and the other, where there is a Particular Council acting as a link between several Conferences.

Not for limited period.—In the first case, the Conference elects its President itself, and it cannot be otherwise. It is to be observed that this election is not made for a limited period, but for an indefinite time. This arrangement has, in some instances, been the subject of criticism on the part of some Conferences; they have feared that thereby there would be placed forever at the head of Conferences some Presidents who would be unequal to the task; that conse-

2 The Spiritual Director excepted. As to his appointment, see footnote to Article 8, p. 130.

3 See 31st Article of the Rule, p. 173.

quently not only would the progress of the Conferences be impeded, but that the poor would come to suffer by it. These fears have certainly some foundation, but the Council General has always deemed them less serious than the inconvenience of frequent elections. It is rare, in the first place, that an annual election, unless it be a mere matter of form, should not be a cause of a certain agitation, and that agitation may injure seriously the internal peace of the Conference. There might, besides, on account of these elections, be formed in the heart of an assembly, formerly the most peaceful, parties, and little cabals.

Office a burden not an honor.—Preferences and antipathies might be engendered and nothing could be more fatal to a work of charity. Besides, is not the spirit of preservation and of permanence necessary for the direction of any work whatsoever; and if a president knows that he is nominated for one year only, can he so easily undertake works of long duration? Perhaps his successor may lead the Conference in another direction, and thus there would be a reason for his attempting nothing. Finally, in a Christian work, where the offices are burdens and not distinctions, *onera non munera,* if a president does really retard the progress of the work, are there not a thousand ways of charitably letting him know it? The experience of fifty years has many times proved that, without offending an honorable brother, it was possible to lead him thus to a retirement, which to him was but a rest long desired. For all these reasons, the Council General has always opposed the system of annual elections, and, thanks to the submission which the Conferences have for its advice, this system has practically disappeared.

Nomination of Officers.—The other officers of the Board are named in these Conferences by the Pres-

ident, with the advice of the Board. This mode of appointment appears better calculated to insure unity in the direction, and to prevent too frequent elections.

Nomination of Presidents under a Particular Council.—In the second case, that of several Conferences connected by a Particular Council, the nomination of the Presidents and Vice Presidents of Conferences belongs to the President of that Council. Article 31 says that these appointments ought to be made by the President, with the advice of his Council. This arrangement has for its object to draw closer among the different Conferences the bonds of fraternity, and to maintain a unity of spirit by means of an appointment emanating from a common authority. It may, indeed, occur that in the midst of the same town, divergent tendencies may manifest themselves among the various Conferences; that one, for example, may incline towards the mode of proceeding of a confraternity; another towards the usages of a mere relieving society; that the first one would be too strict in the admission of its members, the latter too indulgent. The nomination of the Presidents of Conferences by the President of the Council allays all these differences gradually and gently, and succeeds, through selections prudently arranged between the President and his Council, in blending these shades of difference into one common spirit, that of the Society. It is easier, after all, to weigh the peculiar fitness of such or such a candidate in a Council where intercourse is familiar and where there are but few present, than in a Conference where there is greater publicity, and where every objection to the choice proposed may take the appearance of personality.

Qualities desirable in a President.—Finally, whatever may be the mode of nomination of the President, the importance of the selection cannot be too much

insisted upon. Whilst the President should never be in the Conference, but as a kind of elder brother, the *primus inter pares,*[4] experience proves that *what a President is, so is the Conference.* In order that a President should discharge his duties adequately, it should be considered not so much whether he enjoys a well-deserved position in the locality, or whether he is rich and generous, but much rather whether he possesses the personal qualities which are indispensable. Thus, above all, he must have *leisure* to apply himself to the Conference, for an honorary presidency is always a barren one; he should have *zeal,* which often makes leisure; he should also have *energy of mind* as well as *maturity of judgment;* he should be animated with the *spirit* of the works, in order that he may know how to surmount the difficulties which the exercise of works of charity presents, instead of being frightened by them; he should have a *conciliatory spirit,* to prevent or to appease differences, and, in fine, that *piety,* that *lively faith,* which knows how to spread abroad, and which grows strong because they draw down God's blessings.

Presidents to be laymen.—The constant usage of the Society, with some exceptions, which were almost always temporary, has been to confer the Presidentship of Conferences upon simple laymen. It is thus that the Society has been constituted, and has been approved of by the Holy See: and, accordingly, the Council General has always regarded it as a duty to admit into the Society only the Conferences of which the President is a layman. If some exceptional circumstances induced it to derogate from the Rule, it was always on the condition that within a prescribed interval the ecclesiastical President should be replaced by a layman. But from the circumstance that the

[4] The first amongst equals.

Presidency has not devolved upon ecclesiastics, it by no means follows that those amongst them who do us the honor of joining our ranks, not only as Members of Honor, but as active members, should not be received with the utmost gratitude. This is a point which the circular of May 31, 1846, treats of in the fullest manner.

Duties of Officers

ART. 10. The President directs the Conference, receives and submits propositions, calls special meetings, if necessary, and sees that the rules and the decisions of the Society are carried out.

In case of absence, he causes a Vice President to take his place.

ART. 11. The Secretary prepares the minutes of the meetings.

He keeps a register of the names, occupations, and addresses of the members, of the dates of their admission, and the names of those by whom they were introduced.

He keeps an exact account of the families visited. He makes diligent inquiry concerning those submitted for relief, so that the Conference may, as far as possible, visit only families worthy of its sympathy and help.

He notes any changes that occur in the families visited, or in the members who visit them.

The President is, as it were, the soul of the Conference; but he should not, however, absorb, through

excess of zeal, the activity of the Conference in his own. It is well that he should watch over and superintend everything of importance and that he should participate in it, through his advice at least; but it is not desirable that he should overtask himself, and take upon himself alone all the burden; for in that way he would make his functions impossible for a successor somewhat more occupied, and he would destroy the zeal of the other members by thus always substituting his own for theirs.

Vice President acts in absence of President.—When the President is absent, especially for some time, it should be understood that the Vice President has all his powers, and *stands entirely in his place.* A Conference should never stand still for want of a member, and this would be the case if the members did not venture to do anything in the President's absence. It is therefore not alone his *right,* but it is a *conscientious duty* on the part of the Vice President to supply fully the place of the President when absent or prevented from attending, in order that, when the latter returns, he may not find that everything has been languishing for want of him.

This remark does not concern the Conferences alone: it is applicable also, for stronger reasons, to Particular, Central, and Superior Councils, and above all, to the Council General. In an undertaking, we must always have that undertaking in view, not the men.

Duties of the Secretary.—The duties of the Secretary deserve special mention, although they are of less importance than those of the President; for if the President has the whole direction upon his shoulders, the Secretary carries out the details. Upon his exactness or upon his negligence depends consequently a number of good things or of little irregularities.

Thus, when the Secretary is absent or comes late, the minutes are either not read at all, or are not read at the time fixed by the Rule, which is, in fact, the most convenient time. When he does not keep an exact note of the admission of members, of the adoption of families, of the names of visitors, regrettable confusion is the result; sometimes families, long forgotten, suffer from being neglected; sometimes there are others who receive double relief; and these inaccuracies greatly interfere with the regular business of the meetings.

Nothing would be more contrary to the usages of a Society like ours which is entirely voluntary, than finical habits, in imitation of the mode of proceeding of a public department. Accordingly, the Council General cannot do too much to guard the Conferences against everything which would have this stamp upon it, and to recommend them to do everything, simply, without voluminous registers or numberless forms; for otherwise the spirit of our dear Conferences would suffer lamentable injury. But simplicity in proceedings does not exclude order, quite the contrary; and precisely because things are done in a short time, they should be well arranged.

Register of poor families.—Such is the spirit in which the Secretary ought to understand his duties. Thus, the list of the poor should always be kept up to date: opposite to the name and address of each family, and the ordinary relief which they have been granted an entry should be made in a column of observations of the creditable circumstances which concern this family, the principal remarks made by the visitors, and any exceptional assistance which has been granted to them. The keeping of such a list would require scarcely a quarter of an hour weekly; and yet, it may be very useful for the proper guidance of the Confer-

ence, and specially for new visitors, who would find in it valuable information as to the poor intrusted to them.

Duties of Treasurer

ART. 12. The Treasurer keeps the accounts, and renders an account of the receipts and expenditures at every meeting.

This Article is of greater utility than one would imagine at first, and Conferences are requested to follow it to the letter; on the one hand, because by keeping the state of the treasury each time under the eyes of the members, it induces each of them to proportion his demands to the resources, and on the other, because it guards against error. Conferences, then, will do wisely not to depart from the custom of a weekly account being rendered by the Treasurer, as has sometimes been done to shorten the proceedings. But what is of still more importance, is never to fall into arrears with the purveyors. Besides the fact that the price of provisions varies very often, and that disputes may arise if the rule be departed from, it is dangerous for Conferences to allow debts to accumulate, and it may be at some particular moment a cause of great embarrassment. It is much better to pay ready money—as the surest and the simplest way of proceeding.

Investment of money. Class of securities.—The investment of funds, when a Conference has received any sum of money which exceeds the current expenditure, deserves also some attention. We do not speak of a perpetual investment of capital, which would be funded, and the interest alone drawn, a course which would be contrary to the spirit and to the traditions of the Society. We refer to those temporary investments made possible by a fruitful sermon or other

means of acquiring funds, which are made for some months until the winter, with the double view of procuring for the poor some additional comfort, and of assuring the preservation of the capital. Nothing positive can be said here upon this question, but it seems to be prudent for Conferences to invest rather in public than in private securities, and to select those of fixed in preference to those of fluctuating values. High rate of interest is of much less consequence than complete security of the capital, and in critical times the money of the poor must be jeopardized as little as possible, and its recovery should always be prompt and easy. Finally, the investment of unemployed funds is the business of the Conference, and without its vote the Treasurer cannot do it, under the penalty of pledging his own moral responsibility.

Auditors.—Some Conferences are in the habit of naming each year, at the Treasurer's request, a committee for auditing the accounts. This custom appears to be a very wise one, and Treasurers ought to adhere to it, as it protects their responsibility. Nowadays, besides, it is of scarcely less importance to prove that one is correct than to be so in fact. The Treasurer should not permit his accounts to remain unaudited or unexamined longer than the period of one year and the Conference should positively insist upon this being done regardless of the high esteem in which the Treasurer may be held by his acquaintances. This essential requirement likewise applies to all the Councils, or to any office or position in the Society to which its funds may be intrusted.

Librarian

ART. 13. The Librarian collects instructive books adapted to the capacity of the persons re-

lieved by the Conference, and he keeps an account of all books given away or lent.

The importance of a library for the poor, recognized as it has been from the origin of the Society, is still greater now than formerly. The duties of a Librarian are then very serious, and the Conference should support in every way in their power the brother who devotes himself to them. It seems natural that the Librarian should be intrusted with the distribution, at the meetings, of the *Short Readings (Petites Lectures),* which it is so useful to have done continuously and regularly.

Wardrobe

ART. 14. The keeper of the clothes room collects the clothes for the poor and keeps an account of them.

The Wardrobe should be the object of the most particular care on the part of the Conferences; for the poor are as often in want of clothes as of food, and to obtain them we must expend our trouble rather than our money.

In the first place, the attention of the Conference must be often called to the wants of the Wardrobe, which will be frequently without clothes and always insufficiently supplied; when clothes are offered they must be accepted and collected at once that the opportunity may not be lost. When the clothes have been collected they will need mending for the most part. The co-operation of Catholic ladies will be very valuable in this matter of details which men do not understand. Lastly there may be an opportunity of organizing a general search of houses for old articles

of furniture and clothing, such as is now done in some cities. With the consent of the owners all the old stuff, which is encumbering spare rooms, from the chair minus a leg and the torn curtain to the old linen which is so useful to the sick, can be gathered together. The Wardrobe can often, in this way, be well stocked at little cost. Then, indeed, it will be in a position to render great service. For the sick it will procure old linen for bandages as well as material for a change; for the poor it may provide bedding to keep children of different sexes apart. What a god-send is a warm quilt, a clean sheet, a dress, or a coat. It often means health, life, or position: for many a poor person fails to obtain work for want of decent clothes.

Order of Meeting

Procedure at Meetings

Art. 15. I. At the opening of each meeting the President recites the ejaculation *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* (Come, O Holy Ghost), followed by the *Prayer* and by an *Invocation of St. Vincent de Paul.*[5]

II. A portion of some pious book selected by the President is then read. Each member is called upon in turn to perform this duty.

III. The prayer and reading should be gone through with the most serious attention, the object of the Conference being not less the

[5] If the Spiritual Director or any other clergyman be present, the prayer and spiritual reading will, of course, devolve upon him.

maintenance of the piety of the members than the relief of the poor.

Prayer.—Prayer is an essential portion of the business of the meetings, and should never be omitted, as it brings to mind one of the distinctive characteristics of the Society. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a Catholic organization, and to draw down the blessings of God upon its labors, it should always endeavor to sanctify those labors. The prayer, too, should be said on bended knees; for he who would be unwilling to bend his knee in public before his God, would very badly comprehend the humility which the service of the poor requires.

It has become a pious custom in almost all the Conferences, to say, before the invocation of St. Vincent de Paul, these two: Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Have mercy on us. *Cor Jesu sacratissimum, miserere nobis.* Queen conceived without sin, Pray for us. *Regina sine labe concepta, ora pro nobis.* Some Conferences even add the invocation of St. Joseph, the great patron of good works.

Spiritual Reading.—The pious reading should be gone through with attention, and should be neither too long, nor too short: not too long, for fear of prolonging the meeting: nor too short, because the piety of the members should be nourished. The selection of the book from which the reading is to be made belongs to the President; but, of course, the book ought to treat only of Christian and charitable subjects. In a certain old Conference it has become the habit that any member who, in the course of his own reading, meets a remarkable passage of a nature to edify his brothers, shows it to the President and with his assent reads it. This custom is a very good one, and deserves to be extended.

The works most used among the Conferences, for the pious reading, are the *Holy Gospels,* the *Imitation of Christ,* the *Introduction to a Devout Life.* It is absolutely essential to read over, at least once a year, the whole of the Rule, the Circulars of the Council General, and this Commentary.

Minutes

ART. 16. The Secretary reads the minutes of the preceding meeting. Each member is at liberty to make observations upon them.

The minutes ought to contain all that occurs of importance at the meetings, and particularly whatever may serve as a precedent; but they should be drawn up as simply and as shortly as possible. They will thus be more to every one's taste.

Admissions of Candidates

ART. 17. If it be necessary, the President announces the admission of candidates whose names had been mentioned at the preceding meeting, and requests their proposers to inform them of their admission.

ART. 18. If new candidates are suggested, the President announces their names. Members who have any observations to make in relation to the candidates, communicate such in writing, or verbally, to the President, in the interval between the meeting at which the names are announced, and the following meeting. If no objections have been made, the admission of

the members whose names have been announced takes place at the latter meeting. Each member should be careful to introduce into the Society only persons likely to edify their fellow members, and be edified by them, and such as will endeavor to love their colleagues and the poor as brothers.

These two Articles, which should be considered together, indicate the principal *forms* to be followed in the admission of candidates. The points which they put most prominently forward, are the following:

Method to be followed.—1st. The proposal ought to be made, in the first instance, to President in private; for Article 18 lays it down that *it is the President who announces the names of the candidates who have been suggested.* The Circular of July 14, 1841, explaining this passage, is to the following effect: "Moreover, we request that before proposing a candidate, those who suggest him should never fail to confer on the matter with the President, who is specially charged with the direction and with the dignity of the Conference," and the Circular of November 1, 1852, taking up the subject again, adds these reflections: "It is easy to understand how wise these directions are; for, if those who are suggesting a candidate, in place of speaking of the matter in private with the President, began, as we have seen done too often, by proposing him publicly to the Conference, it would be much more difficult to prevent an admission which may be little to be desired. . . . If, on the contrary, the proposal is made always after an understanding with the President, it is to be presumed that it is done because it ought to be done."

Observations to be made privately to President.—2d. Every member is free to make observations upon the candidate; *but these observations ought not to be made during the meeting.* The discussion of any particular name in public, any hesitancy on the matter, or any question raised would be looked upon as raising matters of personality. If the habit were adopted of making observations in this matter, unless there were grave objections to the candidate, every one would conceal his own opinion, would hold his peace, only to give way to his regret apart from the others. The result would be that, without the cordial assent of all, persons would be admitted who should not be received, but to whom one would shrink from objecting publicly. Consequently, in the Conferences there would be an absence of unanimity and of cordial cooperation, and sometimes even defections would take place.

Procedure when candidate objected to.—Now, what should be the course to adopt, if serious objections have been laid before the President? In such a case, the duty of the President is to come to an understanding on the subject, in a free and perfectly cordial manner, with the proposing member to induce him to withdraw the party suggested, if the opposition be serious and well founded. Nevertheless, it may happen, that there are differences upon that point between the President and the member who has made the proposal: in such a case the President will do well to consult his Board, or even that of the Particular Council of the town, if there be one, and to be guided by their advice. It is to be presumed that this moderating opinion will be listened to, and that it will be easy to come to an understanding; but if, unfortunately, the difference of opinion should still continue, it can be put an end to only by a vote of the Confer-

ence—a final resort which is of very rare occurrence, and which ought to continue so.

Admission.—But if no opposition arise, which is the most usual case, the President has not, according to Article 17, to call for a vote; he has simply to state that the proposed candidate has not been the subject of any observation, and to announce his admission. Open voting would have produced serious inconveniences, and a ballot would be a formal action little in accordance with the simple procedure of a Conference.

Qualifications of candidates.—3d. Besides the general conditions which we have enumerated, for the proposal of candidates, Article 18 mentions one especially, which is perhaps too little attended to; it says that *the member should edify his fellow members* AND BE EDIFIED BY THEM. This recommendation is very important, because, if persons are induced to join Conferences as members who do not find attractions in them, who come there just to get through a duty, and because they are constrained to it in some sort, zeal cannot but grow cold. "The first qualification" (as is very wisely stated in the Circular of November 1, 1847), "that a candidate ought then to possess on presenting himself for admission into a Conference, is to attach a very high value to the prosperity of the Society, not assuredly through pride, but through a deep feeling of gratitude towards God Who has raised up in our age this plan, heretofore not thought of or not practised, of succoring the poor, and at the same time of making those better men who visit them."

How to welcome new members.—4th. At the birth of the Society, when a new member was admitted, it was usual for the President to address him an exhortation explaining the spirit of our Conferences. Unfortunately this custom has not been continued, and in consequence of the large number of admissions, it has

been found difficult to put it in practice. But it cannot be too much insisted on that a kind welcome should be given to newcomers, that they should not be allowed to take their seats in the midst of the Conference without some mark of recognition being paid to them, that certain of the members should even be appointed to initiate them into the practical work of our Society; upon this their perseverance often depends. The President gives to the new members a copy of the Rule of the Society, and exhorts him to make himself perfectly acquainted with it by a frequent perusal. How much better and more quickly the spirit of our Conferences would be infused into all the members, if the latter were careful to read the Rule and the circumstances connected with the foundation and development of the Society! Instead of guessing at our customs and rules, and sometimes arriving at a very incorrect notion of them, they would become speedily and completely acquainted with them after a short course of reading.

Certain Conferences have believed that there would be some advantage in giving to their members certificates to attest that they belonged to the Society.

Certificates of membership not to be issued.—This practice would cause many inconveniences in a Society so numerous and widespread as that of St. Vincent de Paul. Apart from the danger of the fabrication of false certificates, is not there still a greater danger to be apprehended of seeing these certificates preserved during all their lifetime by men who may have abandoned their Conferences, and who hawk about, with a personal interested view, these titles which had been too lightly conferred? Then, what are the advantages of these certificates? It is not easy to say; for when a member travels or sets out to visit Conferences, there are more satisfactory means of assuring him a good

reception. For a long time it was considered the right thing to provide a member in such circumstances with a letter from the President. It sometimes happened, however, that members, having secured their admission into a Conference, obtained shortly afterwards a letter from the President recommending them to the Conferences of another city, and they made use of this recommendation to solicit assistance on their own behalf. With our present day cosmopolitanism this method of procedure is accompanied by great inconvenience. In order to eliminate abuse as much as possible, the custom has sprung up of not giving the letter of recommendation at all. The President of the Conference, to which the brother wanting the recommendation belongs, writes directly to the Presidents of the Conferences which the brother proposes to visit or frequent, if he knows them personally. If he does not know them, as most frequently happens, he writes to the Secretariat of the Society and that body does all that is necessary.

Plenary Indulgence on admission.—5th. It is well to call to mind that every member upon entering the Society can gain a Plenary Indulgence on the day of his admission conformably to the Brief of January 10, 1845. It is greatly to be desired that a member should not neglect this precious favor which would certainly be for him the pledge of many other graces.

Treasurer's Statement

ART. 19. The Treasurer announces the state of the funds and the amount of the collection made at the close of the preceding meeting, so that each member may proportion his demands for relief to the resources of the Conference.

No debts: no hoarding.—The spirit of the Rule, as may be perceived by the 19th Article, is, never to allow the debts of the Conference to remain overdue, but at the same time not to hoard. It is in some sort the translation of that expression of our Sacred Writings: "If you have much, give abundantly: but if you have little, give a little, and the little thou hast, give willingly." The work of the Conferences being entirely optional, should be from day to day. Besides, nothing is more Christianlike than to trust to Providence, and to reckon upon Its inexhaustible care when the work is undertaken for God. To put by a reserve, to have at hand a disposable capital which we never touch, to lay out beforehand a budget as in a relief association, are proceedings essentially contrary to the spirit of our Society. When the Society has anything to give and it finds out a real case of misery, it gives bountifully and with a generous heart. If it has nothing, it appeals to the charity of its members, to that of their friends, and of the public; and up to this day God has never permitted this confidence to be deceived.

Tickets for Provisions

ART. 20. I. Tickets for provisions varying according to the requirements of the poor are then distributed.

II. Each member is called upon in turn by the President, and mentions aloud what he requires and for how many families. He gives, when asked, detailed information about these families.

In some Conferences the power, not entirely absolute but very extensive, of asking for his poor what-

ever help he may wish for, is left to each member. It would seem that this custom ought to be reformed. For the natural inclination which leads a man to be more moved with pity for the misery which comes directly under his own eye, the pleasure of giving to his poor more than on former occasions, a certain timidity, in fine, in the presence of reiterated importunities, easily lead members to swell their demands. From this necessarily results an injury to the equitable distribution of help. For when each member fixes at his own discretion the allowances of his poor, he will inevitably make his demands with more or less ardor, according to his character. Consequently, inequalities, much to be regretted will be established among the different families. It is, therefore, a prudent measure to intrust the classification of the poor to a Visiting Committee, *always composed of the same members.* These members visit all the families who ask to be adopted, and they suggest to the Conference their classification into certain categories according to the degree of their necessities; then, once or oftener during each year, they revise the general list of the poor, after having made a special visit. The visitors are always listened to, when defending the interests of their poor, and in case of disagreement the Conference decides.

Here another point presents itself, apparently of secondary importance, but one which, however, deserves attention. Is it right that members who have been absent from a meeting, should be able in the interval between one meeting and another, to get their tickets from the Treasurer?

Tickets should not be sent to absent members.—The opinion of the Council General has always been in the negative. They believe that the true interests of the poor, as well as those of the Conference itself, are

opposed to this permission being conceded. The interests of the poor: for if the members ceased to be under a positive necessity to come to the Conference to get their tickets, they would freely absolve themselves from punctual attendance at the meetings. The weekly collection would be greatly affected by this, even although there was a collecting box at the Treasurer's, an arrangement which has been sometimes suggested. The interests of the Conference are opposed to this permission being granted, for, by absenting themselves frequently from the meetings, the members would in time lose the Vincentian spirit and their taste for the work.

As to the mode of distribution pointed out by Article 20, it has necessarily been modified by the force of circumstances in Conferences which have a large membership, as the mode indicated would take up all the time of the meetings. Many Treasurers have adopted the habit of preparing beforehand the tickets of each member, placing them in an envelope which is handed to him immediately; in this manner the distribution is carried out without loss of time.

Members should give detailed information on families they visit. The Dead Poor: Prayers and Mass.— On the other hand, that which ought not to be laid aside is the custom of asking from members detailed information upon the situation of the families whom they visit. It is not, in point of fact, sufficient that religious improvement should take place among the poor; it is necessary, for the general edification, that the Conference should know that it has been effected; it is necessary that it should be talked of lest the newcomers, not hearing anything said about it, should come to neglect it, and that even the old members should allow themselves to lose sight of it. Further,

every member ought to announce immediately the death of any of his poor: the *De Profundis* is recited for the deceased at the close of the meeting, and the Holy Sacrifice is offered up for him at a later period. If there be yet time, some members are appointed to accompany the body to the Church, and to attend the funeral.

Punctual Distribution of Relief

III. The relief should be punctually given to the poor at their homes before the next meeting. The time, the number, the method of those visits are left to the prudence of each member as well as the means to be adopted to introduce into those families love of religion and the practice of their duties. Meetings of Conferences should be held every week. In order to avoid even the appearance of scandal, two (2) members should go together when visiting a poor family, and every such visit, whether made by two or more members, should only be recorded as one visit to that family. Young women, particularly if they live by themselves, should not be visited by the members on any account, their wants had better be referred to one or more charitable women if no women's charitable or benevolent society exist.

Regular visitation.—This recommendation is important. The families that are helped are often in great distress. To put off for a pleasure trip, for some affair of little importance, the *weekly* visit to be made

to the poor is an act of negligence deeply to be regretted, for the families of the poor often suffer as a result of it. We should never put off our visits beyond the time during which the poor are expecting us. Apart from this the punctuality need not be mathematical. In fact, it would be wrong as a general rule to give the poor the habit of counting on help at a fixed time. The desire to economize and to look ahead would not fail to be weakened thereby.

Difficult Cases

Spiritual Work Amongst the Poor

IV. Members requesting guidance or advice in difficult cases are listened to with attention and kindness, and the President or any other members gives the replies which his experience and his charity suggest to him.

This paragraph recalls once more to visitors the aim of the Society in its dealing with the poor. It is to improve them. Without this, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul would become a merely philanthropic and purely humane work which, even humanly speaking, is very barren and insufficient. The visitors will have then to seek every possible means of instructing the poor. They will make a beginning, sometimes by means of a kind word addressed to the child, or the bestowal of a good book, *une Petite Lecture,* a pious image, or a crucifix; at other times it will be by means of edifying reading performed for some poor invalid whom they will strive to instruct. The manner may be varied infinitely in the details, but in the long run the effort will succeed only through perseverance, love, and above all, prayer. Let us pray for the con-

version of our poor; let us obtain prayers for them from pious souls; let us sacrifice something for this intention and we may be sure of success. It was thus that the Saints acted, and it is one of the secrets of the conversions which they worked.

Of course, before a member consults the Conference upon a case of difficulty, he should take care that no inconvenience can arise from making it public; if such inconvenience might arise he should consult the President in private.

Money Grants

ART. 21. I. If help in money, clothes, or books is asked for, the grounds for such application should be fully explained, and the Conference decides.

II. Should the case of distress be such that a grant of money is indispensable, and that relief in kind will not answer instead, the members receiving the money must take special care to watch diligently over its expenditure.

This article expressly recalls a usage so well established, that it is scarcely necessary to state it, to wit: that the distribution of relief in kind is the rule, and the exception a grant of money. The reasons for this custom are so obvious that it is useless to recall them.

Some Conferences have remarked that certain of their members had a stronger tendency than the others to ask for the extraordinary relief to which the 21st Article refers. The result of this is, that, without their desiring it, their poor are more favored than others. To remedy this trifling abuse, the habit has been adopted of entering the extraordinary relief,

which has been granted, upon the register of families, opposite to the names of the families who had received it; so that the Conference is not again put to the same expense for the same poor person without being fully aware of it.[6]

ART. 22. I. After the distribution of the different kinds of relief, the members deliberate on the disposal of any situations they may be able to procure for the poor, on the plans for the relief of the distressed, and on the families to be visited by new members, or by those who wish to visit more families.

Adoption of Families

II. No family can be placed on the relief-roll of the Society without a previous statement of its wants, made either by the Secretary, or by such other member as may have been appointed by the President to collect information. Before the Conference decides, every member has full liberty to make any remarks upon the case he may think useful.

Young women living alone not to be visited.—The adoption of families should be the subject of very serious attention on the part of the President and of the Conference. It concerns, in fact, the prosperity and the honor of the Society that all abuses arising in this way should be avoided; that women still young,

[6] No member of the Society should be appointed by the Conference to act as Purveyor to those who are relieved by the Conference.

particularly if they live by themselves, should not be visited, and that every precaution should be taken to avoid even the appearance of a scandal. This principle has been laid down from the very commencement, and is again referred to in the preliminary consideration of the Rule, but the more the Conferences are multiplied the more it is indispensable to hold firmly to this. For the poor are to be found everywhere; and when there is so great a choice among so much misery, we should connect ourselves only with those, the relief of whom is exempt from inconvenient circumstances, and cannot cause disedification.

Care must also be taken, particularly in large towns, to adopt only the poor who live in reputable houses. This rule may appear severe; but is it not a case to which the popular proverb may apply: "Charity well regulated begins at home"?

Prudence in visitation.—It is also fit that prudence should be used with regard to poor persons subject to grave faults—drunkards, persons of dissipated habits, or those living in a state of concubinage. Undoubtedly these poor people ought not to be entirely excluded, unless they are in the category of those of whom mention has been made above; but they must not be visited except in the desire to correct them, and but so long as there is hope of effecting that. Otherwise, if relief were still continued to them, after all advice had been exhausted, that would be a cause of scandal for the honest poor, and it would give them grounds for believing, although erroneously, that the Society attaches no value to good morals and honest conduct. There is in this, therefore, a wise middle course to be followed between too great strictness and too much indulgence, and, by paying attention to it, success will be obtained.

Not too many families to be adopted.—Finally, care

must be taken not to adopt too many poor, regard being had to the number of visitors. If the members took charge of too many families, they would be led to visit them only in a hurried way, to do no more for them than just to distribute alms, and to neglect spiritual relief which can only be given during visits of some duration and when a certain amount of intimacy has been cultivated. The Conferences ought to lay down as a rule for themselves to adopt only as many families as they can visit in a satisfactory manner and in the spirit of our holy patron.

Discrimination in selection of visitors. President should know all the cases.—But all is not done by adopting the poor; they must have visitors allotted to them. This duty is the special task of the President; for some member may be suitable for almost every family, and yet not succeed with certain of the poor. He may be too timid, or too harsh, too slow or too hasty, for persons of exceptional disposition. To some of the poor it is well to allot a visitor who impresses them by the gravity of his manner, and even by the importance of his position; with others, on the contrary, success is to be had only by gaining their confidence by dint of gentleness and long patience. There is, then, a study of the character of the visitors and of the poor to be made by the President, and he cannot attach too much importance to it. With respect to the visitors, this labor will be easy for the President who meets them each week; but with respect to the poor it requires more trouble if they are numerous. To effect it, there are two means, between which the President can make a choice: either to make periodically, at least once a year, the complete round of the families, or himself to pay the earlier visits, for some weeks, to the families newly adopted. Some Presidents have found leisure to carry out both plans at

the same time; they cannot be too much congratulated for undertaking such work.

Members Leaving

ART. 23. Members about to leave temporarily or permanently the place where the Conference meets, give notice to the President, who intrusts to others the duties with which such members were charged.

The recommendations of this Article, although matters of pure detail, possess real importance. Thus, if a member neglects to give intimation of his departure, his poor and his duties may be abandoned; if he forgets to acquaint the President personally of it, or if he himself gives charge to another member either of his poor or of his duties, the distribution of the families by the President, which we have just mentioned, may be disturbed by it, or the duties may not perhaps be intrusted to the brother to whom they are most suited. In either case the good order of the Conference would be disturbed, particularly if the circumstances were of frequent recurrence.

It is a good idea that members who are going away should draw up a detailed report upon the condition of their poor, which would enable those who replaced them to understand better and sooner the dispositions, necessities, and misery of these poor. Some brothers have also, upon such occasion, adopted the praiseworthy custom of giving to their Conference a larger sum as alms, to represent them in the collections, in which, during their absence, they cannot share, and to help the Conference in supporting its poor. This practice cannot be recommended too strongly.

Discussion on Matters of General Interest.

ART. 24. The Conference then considers any observations bearing upon its well-being, its development, and the wise distribution of its relief.

This part of the meeting ought not to be neglected because the Conferences would readily degenerate and become monotonous, were they to occupy themselves exclusively with material questions and not to give a little time to such as are general. Here are two shoals to be avoided: the first, that the members, under pretext of being engaged upon more exalted interests, should allow themselves to get into the habit of making speeches, dissertations upon charity, and introducing theoretical discussions which would be quite opposed to the simplicity of our meetings. The second shoal to be avoided is too close restriction to what concerns the Conference exclusively. It cannot be too well remembered that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is *one,* and that, in order that this unity may be maintained, it is well that the Conference should converse often about such things as occur of an edifying nature in other Conferences, that they should endeavor to imitate them and turn them to account, so as not to fall into apathy and torpor. Thus, it is very suitable to select that part of the meeting when the attendance is greatest, to give an account to the Conference, either of whatever has occured of importance at the Particular Council of the town, if there be one, or of the general information contained in the monthly *Bulletin* or other publication of the Society, or of interesting reports of other Conferences. It is also the most opportune moment for

reading the Circulars of the Council General, a deep knowledge of which is too often lacking in the members. Sometimes all these documents are left to rest in the archives of the Conference, or, in other words, in the dust.

It will be well, also, from time to time, to read, at this period of the meeting, some profitable report upon a special work of the Conference, with the view of exciting interest, and of constantly stimulating zeal which is, alas! so ready to languish in every human undertaking.

Secret Collection

ART. 25. I. At the close of the meeting and before the prayer, the Treasurer makes the collection, to which each member contributes an offering proportioned to his means but always in secret. Those who cannot spare time for the service of the poor, try to increase the amount of their pecuniary contributions.

The collection should not be made merely for *form's* sake; it ought always to be done very seriously, and every one is bound to examine himself before God, in his soul and conscience, whether the sacrifice which he makes to the poor is in proportion to his means. Almsgiving, in fact, is not to the Christian a simple counsel, it is a rigorous duty. Whilst it may be discharged otherwise than by the collection at the Conference, and whilst a portion (of the extent of which each one can alone be the judge) ought to be reserved for other works, and especially for those of his own parish, it is right that every member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul should within the bosom of

his Conference, discharge this precept generously and liberally. Otherwise how shall he ask of others if he has not begun by being himself the first to give? How, above all, shall he ask of God to bless his labors, if he has not deserved that blessing by truly adequate self-sacrifice?

The collection, then, ought to be a serious act, and it ought to be a secret one; and nothing would be more opposed to the spirit of the Society than that its members should be stimulated to considerable donations by the attraction of publicity. Thus, a newly-formed Conference thought, with a very laudable intention, that the amount of its collections would be increased if the collections were made upon a plate, so as to allow each one's offering to be seen; and it sought the opinion of the Council General upon the question. The latter were unanimous in condemning this practice. Thus, too, other Conferences have sought to replace the weekly collection by an assessment laid upon the members, either according to a rate fixed beforehand, or according to each one's means. The Council General have, likewise, been at all times opposed to any tendency in this direction. Besides the danger that an assessment upon a low scale would injure the prosperity of the treasury, and that an assessment at a high rate would keep away many good Catholics of small means, there was above all the fear that the secrecy of the collections would be violated.

No difference of rank or fortune.—In Conferences there ought to be no differences of rank or fortune: this is one of the most certain causes of their success in the past. Now, the less opulent should not be exposed to blush at the smallness of their alms, nor the more wealthy be tempted to grow proud of the greater size of their donations. If anywhere Christian equal-

ity should be preserved, it is in the presence of charity. Nevertheless, in some country Conferences it has been permitted that gifts in kind may be made by members as their contribution to the collection. This departure, which yet does not prevent a collection according to the Rule, has been sanctioned by the nature of the circumstances.

Other Means of Raising Funds

II. The collection is intended to meet the needs of the families visited, but the members should not neglect any other means that may present themselves of increasing the funds of the Conference.

At the commencement of the Society, the collections were almost the only resource of our Conferences; at present they are still one of the principal sources of revenue. This maintenance of the resources of the Conferences by the personal contributions of the members themselves is a most happy sign; but, as the Rule says, the members should not neglect any other means that may present themselves of increasing the funds. These means vary according to localities and customs; here it is a charity sermon; elsewhere, bazaars or sales; almost everywhere subscriptions are solicited, and extraordinary donations procured; but what ought not to vary, are the principles which should govern the collection of these resources.

Zeal to maintain the funds.—First, and above all, there must be intense zeal to keep up the Conference funds. This often demands arduous work; refusals have to be endured, difficulties have to be overcome. A member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul ought not to allow himself to be daunted, provided, of course,

that he has not exceeded the limits of propriety. When a person sees at close quarters the misery of so many families, when his heart is sensibly affected by their privations, their nakedness, and more than all by their spiritual destitution, he ought not to let himself be checked by refusals, he ought not to fear being importunate; the pleasure of solacing these miseries well deserves being purchased at some cost.

But should not rely too much on material resource. Methods of collection must be free from reproach.— Yet if there must be zeal, in order not to lose, through our own fault, any occasion of increasing the patrimony of the poor, this zeal must not end in too human an attachment to material resources. In a Christian work money is never more than a secondary thing. What matters more than all else is devotedness—desire for the salvation of souls. Hence follow two conclusions: the first is, that if the funds do not fill the measure of our wishes, we must not be grieved at the fact, nor, above all, must we be discouraged, but on the contrary, we must persevere more than ever; the second is, that to procure money we must never resort to methods which are not entirely of a Christian character. Nothing is, in fact, more fatal than to pursue a praiseworthy end by means which are not free from reproach or to wish to accomplish a Christian work by ways contrary to Christianity. Consequently, there should be no balls for Conferences, no theatrical representations.

The Council General has been often consulted about the interpretation which should be given to the prohibition of "theatrical representations." The following is a summary of the replies made on this point:

I. *Concerts, musical* afternoon or evening parties, may be tolerated, provided that the text of the "interludes," "songs," or "monologues" has been examined

beforehand by the President of the Conference or by a member delegated by him.

II. *Dramatic* representations, properly so called, are only authorized on the conditions that they do not take place in a theater and that the plays do not include women's parts.

Likewise recourse should not be had to lotteries where cupidity is stimulated by the allurement of gain, where recourse is had to speculation in order to bring in funds; nor should any other means be adopted which are repugnant to simplicity or humility. All ought to be modest, Christian, in order not to attract too much the eyes of the world and in order not to drive away the blessings of God.

Meeting Closes With Prayer

ART. 26. The meeting closes with the *Prayer to St. Vincent de Paul* and the prayer *Pro benefactoribus* (For our Benefactors), and *Sub tuum præsidium* (We fly to thy Patronage). Many Conferences have adopted the practice of preceding the invocation and prayer to St. Vincent de Paul by an invocation to St. Joseph. To-day this pious practice has become the rule.

The custom is established in some Conferences of reciting at the close of the meeting the prayer *for the use of the members of the Society,* which is to be found in this book on page 48.[7] It cannot be doubted that this would be a source of graces for the Confer-

[7] An indulgence of 300 days is granted each time this prayer is said.

ences, and it is desirable that as well the members individually, as the Conferences in a body, should recite this prayer frequently.

CHAPTER II

Particular Councils

When several Conferences are established in the same town, Article 4 states that they are to be united by a Particular Council.

Conferences Should Not Be Too Large

The increase of members in the Conferences is certainly a very great benefit and every member should labor actively towards this result. Yet there is a point beyond which this increase leads to serious inconveniences. The meetings lose somewhat of their cordiality, and in the effort to avoid confusion and disorder the members fall fatally into the contrary excess. A Conference is then no longer a place of meeting for Catholic friends; it is an assembly of men who deliberate gravely. Moreover, zeal appreciably relaxes in the same proportion as numbers increase, since one member depends upon others to do what he should undertake himself, and personal action thereby is diminished. It is therefore most dangerous for a Conference to become too large; the spirit of simplicity, of fraternity, of cordiality may be

weakened. Thus from the earliest times it has been considered necessary that Conferences which have reached this point should divide into several Conferences, and experience has justified this opinion; but this division was not intended to lead to a schism, nor even to isolation, nor to an entire severance of the branches of the original Conference. It is for this reason that provision has been made by the formation of Particular Councils, which, while allowing the individuality of each Conference to continue, combine the common strength of all.

Thanks to this combination, we have been enabled to multiply the number of members in important towns in a manner that could not have been expected, as well as to increase the number of the poor visited, the funds collected and the good accomplished. Through this means every parish can have its Conference, and unity of direction in important matters can be combined with great freedom of action on the part of each Conference in the details of its operations.

The division of one Conference into several Conferences is the most frequent occasion for the creation of a Particular Council; yet it sometimes happens in towns which are rather large, or in suburbs attached to them, that a

second Conference is organized entirely apart from the first. This does not make it less necessary to bind these Conferences together by a Common Council, but it should be observed that the Council General, before pronouncing the aggregation of the second Conference, always consults with the older Conference, in order to be well assured that the Conferences are working in harmony, and that the formation of a new center is the result of charity, and not of any unfortunate spirit of rivalry.

There May Be a Particular Council for Rural Conferences

The institution of Particular Councils which at first was only resorted to in the case of Conferences of the same town or of its immediate suburbs was afterwards extended to rural Conferences. The boundary of the jurisdiction of the Particular Councils is fixed in such cases by the Council General at the time of their institution. It varies according to the relations, the proximity, and the necessities of the Conferences grouped together. These Councils are a protection against the dangers of isolation among Conferences scattered through the country, whose very weakness makes it necessary that they, more than all others, should support one another.

Constitution of Particular Councils

ART. 27. The *Particular Council* of a town consists of a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, and of all the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Conferences in the town, and of the Presidents and Vice Presidents of Special Works in which all the Conferences are interested.[1]

Aims at unity of direction and freedom of action.—The composition of Particular Councils has been framed, as will be shown afterwards, with the double view of combining unity of direction, and the free action on the part of the Conferences for the carrying on of their works. Thus, there is at the head a Board, the members of which need not be attached to any Conference, a fact which must necessarily tend to encourage all the Conferences in an equal degree. Apart from this Board, there are the Presidents and Vice Presidents of each Conference, and the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Special Works. All interests are thus protected, so that the decisions arrived at may be accepted more freely by all; and all the works are represented in order that the absence of any one may not involuntarily cause its interests to be neglected.

Special Works.—With regard to the *special* works as the Rule calls them, they are those which, for their full development, require the co-operation of all the Conferences. *These* works alone are represented in the Particular Councils, and not the works of this

1 **All Councils in the United States have, according to custom, Spiritual Directors who are *ipso facto* members of the Councils and of their Boards.**

or that Conference which have the President of the Conference for their natural guardian.

It is well to note in passing that when the article speaks of "a" *Vice President,* here as in sundry articles, that does not prevent there being several Vice Presidents named if there be a real necessity for them; so also as to Vice Secretaries and Vice Treasurers. Nevertheless it would be very much opposed to the spirit of the Society to multiply, beyond what is necessary, the number of officers, in order to foster self-love and vanity.

Note.—The foregoing observation makes it quite plain that the use of special titles, indicating actual official positions in the Society, for paid employees of the Special Works or in the administration of the Central Office of a Council (including women), is contrary to the Rule and Spirit of the Society and should not under any circumstances be permitted.

ART. 28. The *Particular Council* is charged with those works and important measures which concern all the Conferences of the town.

This Article determines plainly the functions of Particular Councils. Thus, if the matter in question be one entirely of detail, or of the internal arrangements for relief in a Conference, the Particular Council has nothing to do with it since it does not affect all the Conferences of the town. But if, on the contrary, it is a question of rule which concerns the Society at large—if it is a measure the result of which will not be confined to the Conferences of the town, but may interest all the others, it does not lie, strictly speaking, with the Particular Council to come to a decision on the matter; it has only to offer advice, leaving it to the Council General to give a definite solution. But

when it is a question of a measure that interests *all* the Conferences of the town and which *concerns them only*, then the Particular Council comes into operation, and it has the right to adopt positive decisions. Without entering into details as to such measures, it is certain that they are of frequent occurrence. Thus, where new Conferences are formed, it is for the Particular Council to fix their limits. When important works are suggested, the Particular Council decides whether there is occasion for them, how they should be proceeded with, etc. When a Conference departs from the Rule the Particular Council should remind it of the Rule and by its advice lead the Conference back to the observance of its duty.

ART. 29. I. It decides on the administration of the common fund.

II. This fund is maintained by extraordinary donations from outside, by collections made at the General Meetings of the town, and by the contributions which the Presidents bring to the Council on behalf of their respective Conferences.

III. The fund is intended to meet the expenditure of the Society in the town, and to help the poorer Conferences.

Particular Councils help poor Conferences. Funds must be employed upon works of the Society.—The administration of the common fund of the Conferences is one of the functions of the Particular Council. This fund is intended, as the Article says, to meet the works of the town and to support the poorer Conferences. **The object in view** shows its real use, and proves its high value. Misery never is, in fact,

distributed equally amongst the different quarters of a town, and it is right that the more abundant resources of the better-circumstanced Conferences should aid the distress of the others. In this is demonstrated one application of that true charity which should animate the members of the Society. It is the best proof that they all act with but one heart and one soul. Here it should be added that the funds of the Particular Council like those of the Conferences, ought always to be employed upon the works of the Society. "We have been asked," says the Circular of December 1, 1842, "if it be permissible to apply some of the funds received as donations or through the collections at Conferences, to any other charitable purpose than the works specially adopted by the Conferences. It appears to us that this ought not to be done; that it would be, firstly, the neglect of the intention of the donors; secondly, such latitude would result in interfering considerably with the works which we have undertaken. In the desire to do everything, we should end, in fact, by doing nothing. A charitable society which does not know how to limit itself, is soon exhausted. Because we have selected certain works, we have not entered upon an engagement to devote ourselves to all. Pardon me, Sir and dear Brother, if in this I appear to wish to restrain the effects of your zeal; but we must be wise and careful in our judgments, and it is to render your efforts more efficacious and lasting that I venture to offer these counsels, dictated by a prudence which may savor of timidity."

The building up of the funds of the Council presents a twofold difficulty: either too much might be drawn into the funds or the funds might be inadequate. If the resources of the Conferences were too much concentrated in the common fund the zeal of the mem-

bers in collecting funds would certainly diminish. It is, perhaps, a weakness to want to expend, through our own hands or through our Conference, the money which we have obtained, and to put forth more ardor into its collection, inasmuch as we shall have a larger share in its distribution; but this weakness is too natural to man, not to be taken into account. If, on the other hand, too limited resources were provided for it, the common fund would fail in its object. The Rule seems to steer safely between these two dangers.

Thus, every Conference is exclusively proprietor of the funds which it receives by weekly collections; by subscriptions; by donations made to it; by the local resources which it procures within its own circumscription, and which vary according to local customs.

Contributions usually on a fixed basis.—The Council places in the common fund the donations made to the Society in the town and not made to this or that Conference; the funds arising from general collections organized, not in a single parish, but in the entire town; the contributions of honorary members (Art. 55); the collections made at the General Meetings of the town; and the offerings of each Conference. It is to be noted that this arrangement as to the funds is necessarily somewhat variable and elastic, and that, in the spirit of the Society, there ought to be made, under this head, as between the funds of the Council and those of the Conferences, certain concessions according to the exigencies of the occasion. Further, the offerings of each Conference are now fixed generally at a certain percentage upon their funds. It seemed useless in fact to have a decision upon this matter at every meeting of the Conference. In Paris the Conferences vote the tenth of their funds; in other towns a different proportion has necessarily been adopted.

The Board

ART. 30. The President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer constitute the Board to which belongs the arrangement of the ordinary business.

Just as in simple Conferences this Board is of great importance; not only does it prepare the subjects for deliberation and summarize them, but it also expedites a number of small details upon which the President is very glad to receive advice, but which are not important enough to demand the calling of an extraordinary meeting. In this way nothing is done hurriedly, and nevertheless small matters which are the most numerous, are not protracted indefinitely. In works of charity if it be of consequence to do them well, they must also be done quickly. If the interests of the Society and the management of business matters render it desirable, the members of the ordinary Council or Board may ask other members to join in their deliberations.

President of Particular Council Is Appointed by the Council on Advice of Conferences

ART. 31. The President is elected by the Council with the advice of the Conferences. On the first occasion, he is elected by the Conferences in meeting assembled. The President appoints the Presidents and Vice Presidents of Conferences and of Special Works, as well as the Vice President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer of the Particular Council, taking the

opinion of his Council upon all these appointments.

This Article clearly defines the occasions and the mode of nomination of the different officers and members of the Particular Council. A question has been raised, viz., could the Council nominate the President after obtaining the opinion of the Conferences, but still contrary to that opinion? and could the President nominate the officers whom he is charged with selecting after obtaining the opinion of his Council, but still contrary to that opinion? The Council General, being consulted upon this question, were of the opinion that on principle the Particular Council, as well as the President, could proceed with the nominations which belong to them; but that, in a work of charity we must adhere less to a strict interpretation of texts than to the nature of the circumstances. Now, in fact, it is certain that a Council could not impose a President upon the Conferences of a town in spite of them, and that a President could not impose upon his Council members whom the majority of that Council would formally reject. Here charity solves the difficulty just as it will prevent its being raised; for, in order that good works may be possible, there must be an intimate union among all; and great danger to the Society would arise upon the day when any would wish to act in virtue of rights and of prerogatives, and no longer in the spirit of cordial mutual trust.

Article No. 31 does not apply in certain cases.—What has just been said as to the nomination of the President of the Particular Council does not apply to the cities in which the Council General, Superior Councils, or Central Councils are established. The Presidents of these several Councils being *by right* Presidents of the Particular Council of the city (or town)

where they are established (Article 44 of the General Rule, 8 of the Regulations for Superior Councils, 7 of the Regulations for Central Councils). The Particular Councils in such cities, in the event of a vacancy occurring in the Presidency of the Upper Council, whereby a vacancy is automatically created in the Presidency of the Lower Council, should abstain from electing a President and should await the election of the President of the Upper Council.

Duties of President

ART. 32. The President of the Particular Council guides its activities, receives and submits propositions, and calls special meetings if necessary. He presides at the General Meetings of the district.

The meetings.—The Rule does not define the time of meeting of the Particular Councils; and it could not do so; for what would suit in one town is often not expedient in another; thus, in Paris, a necessity has been felt for the Particular Council of the city to hold weekly meetings; and these regular meetings have answered very well. In other places, on the contrary, fortnightly or monthly meetings are amply sufficient. The necessities of each town must, then, be taken into account; but it is desirable, save in the case of the Councils which unite rural Conferences together, that the meetings should not be held at a greater interval than a month, since a Council to render the services which are expected from it must be active.

Secretary's Duties

ART. 33. The Secretary prepares the min-

utes of the meetings of the Council. He keeps a register of the names, Christian names, occupations and addresses of the members of all the Conferences of the town with the dates of their admission, and the names of those by whom they have been introduced.

He also keeps a register of the addresses of those who are not permanent residents of the town.

The points of detail which the 33d Article enumerates ought to be carefully observed; and experience has proved that none of these particulars is superflous. Secretaries of Particular Councils ought, then, to take care of this matter, just as Secretaries of Conferences ought to apply themselves to have always up to date the lists of members and the lists of their poor.

Treasurer's Duties

ART. 34. The Treasurer keeps the accounts of the common fund of the town.

It follows that it is to the Council that he accounts. It would be well that, as in the case of the Conference, these accounts should be audited yearly.

Membership of Council

ART. 35. Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Conferences represent their Conference at the Particular Council. The Presidents of *Special Works* attend the Council meetings in

the interest of these works. Each representative makes reports when invited to do so by the President of the Council.

There is nothing to point out here except the concluding provision in this Article, and to insist upon the advantages of these reports being made. These reports although they ought always to be made in simple fashion, yet keep interest thoroughly alive. They prevent meetings from being dull or monotonous; they afford the occasion to Councils to probe to the quick the Conferences and the works of the town, to give advice, to rectify usages that are wrong, to extend such as are useful, and thus to form by the force of example alone, a unity of heart and of mind among the different Conferences.

CHAPTER III

The Council General

Composition of Council General

Art. 36. The Council General is composed of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and of several members.

Art. 37. I. The Council General is the connecting link between the Conferences. It preserves the unity of the Society. It sees to all that can promote its prosperity.

II. With this object in view it makes such decisions as it may deem useful.

Duties of the Council General.—The Council General is the center of the entire Society. It aggregates Conferences, institutes Councils of different degrees, fixes their circumscription, pronounces, if there be occasion, and in serious cases, the dissolution of Conferences and of Councils, adopts general decisions which extend to the whole Society, interprets the General Rule, and directs all the Conferences through its correspondence, its Circulars, and the *Bulletins*.

The Council General grants *Letters of Aggregation* to the Conferences and *Letters of Institution* to the Particular, Central, and Superior Councils. Those Councils which do not possess their *Letters of Institution* will do well to apply for them.

The Council General also grants *Letters of Union* to patronages and works of perseverance which desire to connect themselves with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and so to participate in the Indulgences which this union confers. It thus forms a religious bond between the Society and the persons who carry on these works. At the same time they can only acquire the title of members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul by joining one of its Councils or a Conference.

History of the Council General.—The existence of the Council General goes back to the time when the Society split up into several Conferences; its functions have been developed from time to time according as the general interests have increased and have become of greater importance. The Circular of December, 1837, traces its history. The Rule devotes a chapter to its organization. (See, with regard to the enumeration of the officers of the Board, the remark inserted at Article 27.)

ART. 38. I. It decides upon the administration of the central fund.

II. This fund is maintained by extraordinary donations made to the Society, by collections made at the General Meetings, and by the contributions which each Conference or Council sends to help to defray the general expenses of the Society.

Central Fund.—Notwithstanding the strictest economy, it is not possible that the Society should not have some general expenses: every individual Conference, every Council necessarily has some. The Council General, charged with representing the whole Society, and with corresponding with its different branches spread all over the world, cannot escape this obligation, and it must even feel it in a higher degree. Hence the creation of a central fund. But it is of the very essence of our work to cut down these expenses to what is strictly necessary, to do everything in a simple fashion and consequently economically, and to be sacredly sparing of the money of the poor in respect to everything which does not go *directly* to their relief. The spirit of the Society would be deeply injured, and its success, perhaps, compromised, on the day when these habits were relinquished.

Grants to Council General.—The 38th Article places the annual offerings of each Conference and of each Council among the resources of the funds of the Council General. It is but just that the Conferences of Paris should not bear alone such expenses as relate to the whole Society, and that *each* Conference, having its share in the general expenditure, should have its share, too, in the means of providing for it. Some Conferences have, of their own accord, decided that they would adopt, as the basis of their annual con-

tribution, the hundredth part of their receipts; but however grateful the Council General may be for that decision, nothing is prescribed by the Rule on this subject; nothing is asked by the Council General; these grants are entirely optional, and it appears that the more spontaneous they are, the more highly they are prized. The purpose of the fund of the Council General is not merely to defray the expenses of correspondence and administration; the fund ought especially to extend a helping hand to poor Conferences, for which temporary assistance is necessary. Every year, the Council General makes grants which are unfortunately insufficient, either to Conferences which are organized in poor localities, and to which a small remittance of money is a valuable encouragement, or to those which, after existing for some more or less long period, meet with a financial crisis. Thus many Conferences have been supported, maintained, preserved, perhaps, from the decay into which they were about to fall. Alone, they would have succumbed; but feeling themselves sustained, they have regained courage, and they have imparted it to the poor whom they were relieving, and to the rich who could give them aid.

Special appeals.—But circumstances arise of so serious a nature, that the treasury of the Council General which is always very poorly furnished, cannot succeed in affording a remedy for them. Thus, after inundations, famines, epidemics, wretchedness rises to such proportions that the united efforts of all the Conferences are required to provide some remedy for the evil. In such circumstances the Council General first gives its own little contribution, and then makes an appeal to the Conferences, either a general appeal if the misery be excessive, or one limited to certain countries, if the misery be confined within a certain radius.

Thank God these appeals have always been received in the most charitable and the most fraternal spirit.

By Council General only.—These general calls made upon the Conferences should be confined to very rare cases; for we can only have recourse to these exceptional means profitably so long as they are used with extreme discretion. Further, they ought to be made by the Council General *only*. Otherwise, there would no longer be any restraint, and each one constituting himself judge of the expediency of the demand, the result would be so great a multiplicity of calls that disorder would ensue.

Individual Conferences should not appeal to other Conferences without permission.—The consequence of this (and perhaps it is not unprofitable to recall it to mind) is that no Conference ought, *of its own accord and by itself,* transmit circulars for subscriptions, requests for money, to the Conferences at large. In the district of a Particular, Central, or Superior Council, it can be done within that circumscription with the assent of *that Council;* but outside of that circumscription a general application for help can be made only through the intermediary of the Council General. That is at once the means of ensuring the success of large collections and of stopping others.

How Members Are Appointed

ART. 39. The members of the Council General are appointed by the President, with the advice of the Council.

According to an old custom, confirmed by a decision of the Council General, under date of November 24, 1851, it is for the Council General to decide if there be occasion to appoint new members. When

that decision is in the affirmative, the President General having taken the advice of the Council, appoints the new members. (See the commentary upon Article 31. The same principles are applicable here.)

Active not Honorary.—No figure has been fixed for the number of members of the Council. The number necessary may vary according to circumstances, and with the growth of the Society it may be found useful to summon additional helpers; but according to the spirit of the Rule, no more than the number of members that is really necessary should be introduced into the Council. It has always been considered that the duties of the members should be active and not simply honorary, and that an unduly large membership would make it difficult to preserve the necessary unity of purpose and direction. In fact, the membership of the Council General has been, for many years, between twenty and twenty-five.

The members of the Council General are chosen, as a general rule, from among the Presidents or members of Conferences who have rendered most service to the Society, and who are free to devote most time and attention to its general interest. At the same time, the Council General has always reserved to itself liberty to invite to its ranks persons remarkable for their piety and love of good works, persons who honor our Society by their co-operation. Such nominations should, however, be very exceptional and should be due to the circumstances of the time and to the special qualities of the new member of the Council.

How the President General Is Appointed

ART. 40. (1) When a President General of the Society is to be appointed, the Council General is convened by the Vice President. This

meeting is preliminary and is devoted to arriving at an understanding as to the person who should be intrusted with this office. If the former President be still living, he is requested to designate the person whom he believes it desirable to elect.

(2) When an understanding has been arrived at as to one or more names, the Council adjourns for two months. In the interval, the proceedings of this preliminary meeting are made known to the Presidents of the Particular Councils,[1] who consult their colleagues; and to the Presidents of the Conferences, who consult their Boards, or even their Conferences. All the Presidents transmit their opinions to the Council General, and according to these opinions the Council General completes the election, an exact minute of which is recorded.

(3) While the election is pending, all the members of the Society offer up, either in private or at the meetings, a special prayer to God, namely, the *Veni Creator,* in order that the Holy Ghost may enlighten them in the choice they are about to make.

The Article indicates sufficiently the mode of elec-

1 **At that period the term Particular Council meant all the Councils other than the Council General. This arises directly from the actual terms of the Brief of His Holiness Gregory XVI of August 12, 1845:** ***Consilia particularia provinciarum sive urbium.***

tion of the President General, and there is no necessity to go into detail. The important point is to remind the Conferences of the necessity for prayer while the choice is being made, because the election is always a serious event in the Society, and the grace of God cannot be too fervently implored that the choice may be a good one, and that the candidate nominated may be worthy of the laborious charge to which he is called.

Duties of the President General

ART. 41. The President General summons special meetings, and presides over General Meetings as well as over the meetings of the Council General.

Secretary General

ART. 42. (1) The Secretary General keeps a register of the Christian and surname, occupation, address, and date of admission of each member of the Council and a record of the membership of the Board of each Council or Conference and of the place, day, and hour of its meeting.

(2) He prepares the minutes of the meetings of the Council General, and of General Meetings.

(3) He draws up an annual report on the work of the Society.

(4) He is intrusted with the general corre-

spondence with the Presidents or Secretaries of the several Councils or Conferences.

(5) He has the custody of the records of the Society.

Owing to the growth of the Society it would not be possible for the Secretary General to keep a general register of all the members, but the names of those who form the Boards of the Conferences should be mentioned every year in the statistical tables.

It is unnecessary to point out that in dealing with the correspondence the Secretary should consult with the President General, or with the Vice President General, if delegated for that duty.

Treasurer General

ART. 43. The Treasurer General keeps the accounts. He keeps a record of the receipts and disbursements, and submits his accounts to the Council General.

ART. 44. A member of the Council General is deputed by the President General to preside over the Council of Paris, if he cannot do so himself; several members are nominated, at the suggestion of the Secretary General to discharge the duties of Vice Secretary.

Two Councils in one town. President of senior Council is President of both.—In all cases where two Councils, such as the Council General and a Particular Council, a Superior Council and a Particular Council, a Central Council and a Particular Council, etc., exist in the same town, Article 44 lays down a useful

principle, namely, that a member of the Council which is the higher in rank, either the President or a member delegated *ad hoc* by the President should always preside over the Council of lower rank. Undoubtedly, bickerings and disputes about the pre-eminence are little to be apprehended in a meeting for charitable purposes; but it would be so disagreeable to have them raised that they must be avoided as far as possible, and the holding of the Presidentship of the two Councils by the same person is one of the most effectual means of preventing disputes and irritability.

CHAPTER IV

General Meetings

Something has been said already of General Meetings and their utility, but it is well to study their spirit and details more closely.

What they are: of several Conferences.—General Meetings are meetings of many Conferences, where several exist in the same town, or even the meeting of the active and honorary members of the only Conference of a town.

Of isolated Conferences. Necessity of meetings to gain the Indulgences.—Isolated Conferences have often thought that they could not hold General Meetings unless in union with some of the Conferences of the neighboring localities, and that it would be impossible for them to hold General Meetings by themselves alone. This view is opposed to the practice of the Society which regards as a General Meeting every more formal assembly, where, in the presence of the members, both active and honorary, and of the benefactors of the Conference, an account is given of the

good accomplished and contemplated. It would be very unfortunate that the General Meeting should be omitted, for in this way the Mass of the festival days would be omitted, the members would cease to meet for the purpose of praying together, so as to enkindle their piety; or, even if they did not give up the pious reunions, they would at least lose the Plenary Indulgences of the four festivals of the Society, which can only be obtained upon the double condition of Communion and of assisting at the General Meeting.—(Brief of January 10, 1845. See the Circular of November 1, 1849.)

Group meetings.—Now it is beyond doubt that the holding of these four meetings presents difficulty in small towns; that it is not easy to collect together four times a year members of the clergy and persons who are strangers to the daily works of the Conferences, in order to lay before them relatively small results. For this reason the Council General has not ceased, for many years past, to urge neighboring Conferences to make arrangements for holding General Meetings in common, sometimes in one town, sometimes in another. It is partly for this reason, also, that it insists upon the organization of Particular Councils by means of which this part of our Rule can be more easily carried into operation.

Value of General Meetings. Should not be formal or occasions for eloquence.—General Meetings are very useful means of reviving zeal; they interest honorary members and benefactors in the Society whose work is maintained by their co-operation; they afford an opportunity of speaking to them of the poor, and of obtaining for the poor more generous assistance. For the active members these meetings provide an occasion for reviewing their work and of considering how it can be improved. From every point of

view they are, then, useful, and in towns where there are many Conferences they are necessary in order to keep up mutual relations. Yet care must be taken that they do not degenerate into formal meetings and occasions for speeches and eloquent displays, but that they remain what they ought always to be, a family gathering, somewhat more numerous than is usual, but humble, Christian, and full of simplicity.

The Council General has been often asked if ladies ought to be invited to the General Meetings. Notwithstanding local reasons which have a certain weight, the Council General has always answered in the negative, since, to this step, which would be free from obstacles in some towns, there may be some objections in other more considerable places, and, the precedent once established, it would be difficult not to allow it to extend itself continually, even until it would become the rule.

Dates of the General Meetings

ART. 45. (1) General Meetings are held every year: on December 8th, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin; on the first Sunday of Lent; on Good Shepherd Sunday[1] (the anniversary of the translation of the relics of St. Vincent de Paul); and on July 19th, the feast of our holy patron.[2]

Not subject to alteration.—The periods fixed by the Rule for the General Meetings ought to be scrupu-

1 The second Sunday after Easter.

2 The members may hold the General Meetings which they are obliged to attend to gain the indulgences, either on the eve of the feast from the afternoon, or on the feast itself, or on one of the seven days immediately following it.

lously observed; and it would be very much to be regretted if isolated Conferences believed they were entitled to alter them. Is it not touching to think that on these occasions all the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are assembled to speak of God, of their poor, and of their own sanctification? Are there not graces attached to this community of prayer and of action? Yet it should be observed that the days indicated are not rigidly fixed by the Briefs, which allow some days latitude for holding the four General Meetings.

(2) The President is empowered, moreover, to call extraordinary General Meetings.

Procedure at General Meetings

ART. 46. The General Meetings, like Conference meetings, open with prayer and spiritual reading.

This practice should be strictly followed and should never be departed from on any pretext, lest the General Meetings should lose this characteristic of a Christian assembly. For this reason the Council General has always been of opinion that, though it may often be desirable to invite to the General Meetings persons who are strangers to the Society, either for the purpose of removing prejudice or of obtaining their co-operation, nevertheless the prayer and spiritual reading should never, out of consideration to them, be omitted. If they have the misfortune to be such indifferent Christians as to take offense at this practice, it is much better not to invite them. It is of little consequence that our meetings should be brilliant, but it is of very great consequence that they should preserve their religious character.

New Members Introduced

ART. 47. The Secretary having first read the minutes of the preceding meetings, calls aloud the names of the members admitted into the different Conferences since the last General Meeting, as furnished to him for this purpose by the different Presidents. These members rise, the Secretary presents them to the Society and to the President, who addresses them very briefly.

The actual presentation of the members to the meetings and to the President, has become almost impossible in practice at largely attended General Meetings. Disorder and confusion would result from carrying it out. But when the meeting is not very large, it is well to keep to this custom, which is a good proof of the spirit of brotherhood, and which is of long standing.

Reports of Conferences Read If Possible

ART. 48. The Presidents of Conferences report on the state of their Conferences. A summary of each report, containing changes in membership and in poor families assisted, the total of the receipts and expenditures, the amount and nature of the expenditure, is handed in to the Secretary.

In large meetings general summary should be read. —This Article cannot now be followed literally, except at General Meetings where a small number of Confer-

ences come together. In practice, it would be impossible that ten or twelve Presidents, sometimes even forty or fifty, should come forward in succession to give accounts of the work of their Conferences. It is necessary that they should forward to the Secretary their notes upon the material points, and that the Secretary or another member should draw up a complete statement.

What the Report should contain. No panegyrics.— Whatever may be the form of the report, an essential point is that it should contain edifying facts, of a nature to excite zeal, and above all, that it should not be a panegyric of the Society. The praises which a work receives from without are often the cause of great danger to it, but the panegyrics which it bestows upon itself are proof that the Christian spirit has departed from it.

ART. 49. The Secretary then reads letters from those Conferences which have not been able to send a representative to the meeting. He also reads extracts of any other letters which may be of interest to the Society.

ART. 50. The President then announces the measures, taken by the Superior or directing Council for the good of the Society, and, if necessary, consults the meeting itself.

The last part of the Article is optional, as the expression "if necessary" shows. The attendance at General Meetings having become very numerous, it would be difficult now, more especially in large towns, to consult them.

Address of President or Some Members at His Invitation

ART. 51. (1) The President, or some members of the Society invited by him, addresses the meeting in a few words of Christian and charitable exhortation.

The address here referred to is delivered sometimes at the commencement, sometimes at the close of the meetings, and it should be short, simple, and practical. It should not be a theoretical discussion, since such matter is not the object of the Society, nor should it be a sermon, since that would be inappropriate from the lips of a layman. But if it directs attention to the special needs of the Society, if it points out carefully the difficulties to be avoided in certain works, if it encourages zeal and devotion, it may contribute substantially to the charitable life of the Conferences.

(2) The Society considers itself fortunate when persons eminent for their character, their virtue, and their knowledge, are good enough to be present at the general meetings upon the invitation of the President, and to close it, as has been said, with an exhortation.

Meeting presided over by a Bishop or priest if possible.—The General Meetings are, as far as possible, held under the presidency of a Bishop or Parish Priest, or ecclesiastical dignitary. It is an honor and a happiness for the disciples of St. Vincent de Paul to be able to relate their feeble efforts to their fathers in the faith and their guides in Christian works; and when, against their will, they are deprived of this pleasure,

their meetings lose a great part of their charm and interest.

Place of honor to the clergy.—It is the rule, and one which is so abundantly justified in itself that it needs no emphasis, that the places of honor at the meeting belong, of right, to the clergy, and that the layman who acts as President does no more than direct the arrangements of the meeting. It is to their Lordships the Bishops, when they are so good as to come amongst us, or to the priests whom they select as their substitutes, that the first places belong. This is a feeble but a very proper testimony which Christians owe to the ministers of God, and which never should be forgotten.—(See the Circular of May 31, 1846.)

ART. 52. After the collection and usual prayers, the meeting closes.

CHAPTER V

MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY

ART. 53. Besides its active members, the Society has corresponding members and honorary members.

Aspirant members.—Another category of members has, for many years past, been added to those enumerated in the Rule, namely, aspirant members. These members are chosen from amongst young men under eighteen years of age; sometimes they are attached to ordinary Conferences, whose labors they take part in under the direction of the elder members; sometimes they are sufficiently numerous to be organized into special Conferences, either in senior Catechism

classes, or in Catholic colleges or seminaries. This innovation, whatever may be the mode adopted, is very valuable. It gives useful reserves to Conferences, provides for recruiting among the young, and fosters in them, the spirit of charity and zeal, and suggests to them, quite naturally, the idea of becoming active members of Conferences when they shall have arrived at the proper age. The Brief of January 10, 1845, makes aspirant members participators in the Indulgences of the Society, and the Council General has published special instructions for Conferences of colleges and institutions.

Change of Residence

ART. 54. (1) A member changing his residence and going to a place where there is no Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, does not thereby cease to belong to the Society, but becomes a corresponding member. He puts himself in communication with the Conference or Conferences of the town of his diocese nearest to his residence, and corresponds with the Secretary of the Council or of the Conference of that town. Should there be no Conference in his diocese, he corresponds with the Secretary General.

The Circular of November 1, 1849, comments upon this article as follows:

"It is time to turn this article, hitherto a dead letter, so to speak, into actual practice. But the great difficulty is to draw closely together the relations between the corresponding members and the Confer-

ences, and to give something to do to these members as well as to the Conferences, in order to keep up the relations when once they have been established. Now, if every isolated member communicated, as the Rule contemplates, with the Conference of his diocese or, in countries where that organization exists, with the Superior or the Central Council, if he were received in the capacity of a corresponding member, if he sent his offering to it regularly, and received in return the funds necessary for succoring, in the name of the Conference, the poor of the locality in which he resides, if he transmitted, at certain periods, a report upon the families, upon their moral and material condition, much advantage would result from it to all persons. In the first place, the corresponding members would, by this means, regain the incentive afforded by community of effort, of which they were deprived, and would escape from the isolation in which they were in regard to the Society. The Conferences in the neighborhood would have the nucleus of a body of devoted members ready to dispose of collection circulars through the country, to circulate reports and distribute good books. The entire Society by becoming better known, would spread more easily in a great number of small towns and villages. Finally, the poor in the country would receive some additional succor, and, what is more important, would have more persons to serve them.

"If this plan be not adopted, there is a more simple way of arriving at the same end, but a less perfect one, as it seems to me. You have doubtless remarked, Sir and dear Brother, in the Brief of January 10, 1845, a very striking provision which enables isolated members to gain the Indulgences granted to Conferences, upon the condition of accomplishing, so far as is in their power, the ordinary works of the Society. Every-

one then is stimulated to devote himself to the task; the Father of the Faithful invites us to it, urges us to it, and points out to us the way. Now if every isolated member, during the leisure of the vacation, took advantage of this valuable provision, how much good would result for himself, and for the poor in his neighborhood! Let us multiply, though it be only by two poor families relieved, the number of our brothers who, every year, leave us to settle themselves in the country, or who spend there some months or even weeks, and we shall be surprised at the blessed harvest which it will be given us to gather."

Receives Annual Report

(2) He receives every year a report on the work of the Society, and maintains with it a communion not only of prayer but also of good works, by doing works of charity in his own neighborhood, and by advancing the interest of the Society whenever he has an opportunity.

The Bulletin affords means of intercourse.—"Is it desired, Sir and dear Brother, that these works, isolated indeed, but which, if my appeal were heard, would not be without their importance, should be increased and preserved? If so, one precaution is necessary, namely, to maintain between the Society and the corresponding members constant intercourse such as Article 54 of the Rule points out. The *Bulletin* of the Society, moreover, affords greater facilities for this intercourse now than at the time of the foundation of our Conferences. Following each of us into his own home, it comes at regular and frequent intervals to point out the progress of the Conferences, to indicate to us the dangers to be avoided, the examples to be

followed, and thus it may serve to bind to our charitable work the members whom distance separates from us. The hope of seeing these members become the most assiduous readers of the *Bulletin*, has indeed been one of the motives which led us to undertake this laborious work."

Honorary Members—Their Duties

ART. 55. Honorary members do not attend the ordinary meetings of the Conferences.

They are invited, like ordinary members, to all other meetings.

They send every year a special contribution to the Treasurer of the Council or Conference of their town.

As a general rule, the honorary members do not assist at the ordinary meetings of the Conferences. Otherwise, it would be necessary to ask ourselves why they, taking part in the weekly meetings, should exempt themselves from the labors of their brothers. Yet, whenever they desire to assist at the meetings, it has never been in the spirit of the Society to refuse them admission, since there is the hope that they may gain a taste for the work, and a desire to devote themselves to it. Their admission to Conference meetings cannot be the general rule, and, moreover, whenever they are admitted to the ordinary meetings they are not to have a deliberative voice. To act otherwise would occasionally leave the decision of questions gravely affecting the Conferences to persons who are not sufficiently in touch with all the details of their administration to be animated with their spirit in the same way as are the active members.

But, if the presence of honorary members at the ordinary meetings of the Conferences be not the rule, their invitation to the General Meetings as well as to the Masses and religious ceremonies of the Conferences, such as sermons, retreats, etc., is decidedly the rule.

Their offerings not secret.—Unlike the active members, who bestow their donations upon their Conferences under the form of secret collections, honorary members are obliged, by force of circumstances, to transmit their offerings in the form of subscriptions. The Rule does not state that the subscription should be the same for all, nor do the Briefs of Indulgences say so.

And go to the Particular Council where one exists.—In the towns where there is a Particular Council, the Rule decides that the offerings of the honorary members should be handed over to that Council. This is a mode of creating funds for it, out of which the resources of the Conferences may be supplemented in proportion to their needs.

At the same time this provision of the Rule is not so stringent as to preclude a Particular Council from giving over to the Conferences the subscriptions of honorary members. The Conferences will have all the greater zeal in recruiting honorary members if they hope to profit by their subscriptions.

Mode of Election of Honorary Members.—Honorary members are received into the Society in the same manner as ordinary members. Where several Conferences are established in a town, honorary members are admitted by the Particular Council.

Subscribers not honorary members. . . . Nor ladies. Conditions of admission the same as for active members.—This point is of very great importance, and unfortunately it is very little observed. Sometimes honorary members are confused with subscribers, and no more is required of them than an alms, more or less large, without any consideration being paid to their religious habits. At other times the title of "honorary" is given to active members who have been a long time absent from their Conferences, but whose names the Conferences have not ventured to remove from the roll of members. Sometimes even ladies have been enrolled as honorary members. All these customs are contrary to the Rule, and ought to be entirely discontinued; for the honorary members are actually members of the Society, according to the terms of the Rule. When they wish to become active members, it is very difficult, in practice if not in right, to refuse to receive them. They assist at the festivals, at the Masses, at the General Meetings of the Conferences; they are entitled to very extensive indulgences. Whence it follows that to be admitted, they ought to be within the conditions which the Society imposes on its active members; otherwise there would be too great a difference between those two classes of members. If the members of one were practical Catholics, and of the other persons who pay little attention to things of a religious character, would there not be reason to fear that in the end the spirit of the Conference might grow cold as a result of this indifference, and of the excessive deference which the active members might wish to show to the honorary members?

By way of interpretation of this paragraph of the Rule and with the object of making generally applicable the practice so long followed in the large towns, the Council General has decided that the several Con-

ferences in a town should have power to deal directly with the admission of honorary members, provided that the Particular Council had delegated this right to them by an express resolution.

Clergy: Members of honor.—Besides the honorary members there is another class of members which the Rule does not mention, but of which the Circular of May 31, 1846, informs us under the name of Members of Honor (*membres d'honneur*), namely, the clergy who desire to honor the Conferences by the insertion of their names upon their roll, and whom it seems to be much more respectful to designate under the title of Members of Honor, than under that of honorary members.

Subscribers

ART. 56. Every Conference may have, moreover, ordinary subscribers.

These subscribers are not members of the Society, but as benefactors are entitled to its prayers.

This article tends to remove the last remaining objections against the decision of the preceding Article upon the conditions required in the case of honorary members, for it points out the means for securing for the poor the generosity of those persons, men or women, who wish to bestow their alms upon Conferences, and who, because they do not fulfil the religious conditions, or by reason of their sex, cannot, according to the Rule, be admitted as honorary members. Subscribers, not being members of the Society, may be received from among persons of every religious opinion.

Benefactresses.—Many Conferences turn to use, in a way which is very profitable to the poor, the zeal of benefactresses, either as collectors, managers of clothing depots, employment of the poor, or for works in which the members cannot engage in a direct manner. Such zeal deserves to be imitated.

CHAPTER VI

The Festivals of the Society

Art. 57. (1) The Society celebrates the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and the Feast of its Patron, St. Vincent de Paul.

(2) The Conferences assist at Mass, on December 8th and July 19th and also on the anniversary of the translation of the relics of St. Vincent de Paul.

(3) On these feast days the members pray for the prosperity of the Catholic Church, for the increase of charity amongst men, and for the blessings of God on the work in which they are associated.

(4) Should any member be absent from the locality or prevented by illness from attending, he assists in spirit at least with his brethren, and prays for them as they pray for him.

Art. 58. The day after the general meeting in Lent, all the members of the Society assist

in a body at the Requiem Mass which is offered in the town for the repose of the souls of the deceased members of the Society.[1]

According to the Briefs of January 10, 1845, the festivals should be celebrated on the actual day of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, December 8th; on the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, July 19th, and of the feast of the translation of the Saints' relics, the second Sunday after Easter. If the day were changed, the Indulgences could no longer be gained. As the Conferences, and particularly those in the country, often experience substantial difficulty in connection with the fulfillment of these conditions, the result unhappily was that a great number of Conferences were deprived of the Indulgences which the Father of the Faithful has dispensed to us with such great liberalty. To remedy this, the Council General solicited from the Sovereign Pontiff a modification of the Brief of January 10, 1845, and the extension of these precious favors, which it has obtained by a third Brief, bearing date of March 18, 1853, and by the Rescript of January 30, 1888, is as follows:

1st. The Plenary Indulgences granted by the Brief of January 10, 1845, for December 8th, can be obtained at the Masses specially celebrated for the Society, either on the day of the Feast of the Immaculate

[1] **The Brief of September 13, 1859, transferred to the first Sunday in Lent the Plenary Indulgence previously attached to assistance at the Mass of the first Monday of Lent. Now, by virtue of the extension granted by the Rescript of January 30, 1888, as explained by the letter of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences dated July 15, 1888, it is no longer only on the first Sunday of Lent that this Indulgence can be gained, but on any one of the seven days following. In regard to the attendance at the Mass, see Brief of September 13, 1859, and the Instruction on Indulgences.**

Conception, or on the day to which it is transferred in the diocese, or on one of the seven days immediately after the feast.

2d. The Plenary Indulgence granted for the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, can be gained on July 19th, or during the seven days which follow it.

3d. Similarly, the Plenary Indulgence granted for the Feast of the Translation[2] can be gained on the day of the feast or on one of the seven days which follow it.

4th. Similarly, lastly, the Plenary Indulgence, granted for the first Sunday of Lent (Masses for deceased members and General Meetings) may be also gained on any one of the seven days immediately following this Sunday.

For information as to the manner in which the Indulgences may be gained it is essential that the actual text of the Pontifical Briefs and Rescripts should be consulted.

Observance of Festivals Most Necessary

The observance of the festivals of the Society is one of the obligations with which we ought to be most deeply impressed. How, in fact, can the members of Conferences hope to see their labor prosper, if they do not beseech God to bless them, and what more powerful means of obtaining this blessing is there, than to ask it all together, united in the same prayer and the same faith, at the foot of the same altar? Besides, how is it possible to compensate for the union of hearts, which is the result of these pious practices and one of their most precious results? Without the festivals of the Society, the ties which mutually

2 **The second Sunday after Easter is the feast of the Translation of the relics of St. Vincent de Paul. See** Brief of His Holiness Gregory XVI of January 10, 1845.

bind the Conferences together would be very quickly loosened, and the material means which have been pointed out many times already, would soon become useless in the absence of spiritual means blessed by the Church. It is, therefore, of the very highest importance that every Conference, and in every Conference, every member, should observe the four festivals of the Society as scrupulously as is possible; for a member, however zealous a Christian he may be in other respects, does not possess the true spirit of the Society, if he voluntarily neglects to observe its *feast,* and a Conference which falls into this defect sees in a short time the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul grow feeble and die out in it.

Member prevented from attending through illness.—The situation of the member, referred to in paragraph 4 of Article 57, who is absent from the locality or otherwise prevented from attending the Mass and the General Meeting with his brothers, has been modified by the Rescript of January 30, 1888. Under the terms of the Rescript the same Indulgences may be obtained by such member, if he has been prevented from attending on account of serious illness or through infirmity, provided he performs some other work of piety assigned to him by his confessor. (See the text of the Rescript.)

Mass and prayers for deceased members.—Respect for the dead is a condition essential to any work that is to endure, and among Christians it is so rigorous a duty, that to omit it is in some sort to fail in one of the principal obligations of the Christian life. Accordingly the Rule expressly recommends and usage has since established the practice of reciting the *De profundis* before the close of the Conference meeting for members lately deceased, and of having Mass celebrated for the repose of their souls. Some Confer-

ences, not content with the anniversary of the first Sunday in Lent, add to it that of the commemoration of the dead. The Brief of January 10, 1845, rewards by a special Indulgence attendance at Masses for deceased members.

Observation

Art. 59. None of the obligations imposed by the Rule is binding in conscience, but the Society relies for their fulfillment on the zeal of its members and their love of God and their neighbor.

RULES

OF

SUPERIOR COUNCILS

(Extract from the *Bulletin* of May 1, 1850.)

For many years the really providential extension of the Society has, in the countries situated outside France, rendered an institution necessary which our first rules did not contemplate, viz., the establishment of Councils charged with the direction of the Conferences of an entire country, and established as intermediaries between the Council General, the center of the whole Society, and the Conferences separated from it by distance, language, and local customs.

Formation of Superior Councils.—This institution, self-begotten so to speak, has fortunately extended and has contributed, by its development, to the progress of our work in foreign countries, where otherwise it would have penetrated with difficulty, and where it would have been maintained with still greater difficulty. In their turn, England, Ireland, Belgium, Holland, Rhenish Prussia, Mexico, Canada, Spain, Italy, and many other countries have seen such Councils established; and as a result of this organization, the Conferences of these different countries have been formed with greater facility in a common spirit, and have been multiplied in a more rapid manner. The experiment having proved conclusive, the time has come for incorporating into our written Rules regulations applicable to these Councils which may serve

as a guide and as a model for Councils as they are successively formed, without infringing upon usages already venerable in the Society and confirmed by the Council General, or without being even a code, invariable and absolute, for the future.

With this idea the Council General has drawn up a series of Articles in addition to the Rule; but before finally adopting them it desired to receive enlightenment and advice from the Councils in Europe, that is to say, from those which time and distance permitted it to consult. This advice did not fail the Council General, to whom it has been most valuable; it has most certainly contributed to the improvement of an important Rule.

Intermediate between Particular Councils and the Council General.—The regulations which we are about to explain briefly and the text of which we give further on, form a summary of local usages and of the chapters of the General Rules relative to Particular Councils and to the Council General itself. The Superior Councils are, in fact, intermediate between Conferences or Particular Councils intrusted with the interests of Conferences in a city, and the Council General charged with the direction of all the Conferences. In their powers, as in their nature, they ought then to possess something of the attributes both of a Particular Council and of the Council General, and this idea has been uppermost in the preparation of the Rules respecting them.

An initial difficulty arose, as to the name to be given to these Councils. Should they be designated in the Rule under the title of Provincial Councils, as in the Brief of February 10, 1845, and August 12, 1845? Strong reasons weighed in favor of this title, one already old among us and accepted by most of the Councils; but the apprehension which was manifested

that in many countries it would awaken national susceptibilities unfavorable to the Society, induced us to adopt a new denomination, that of Superior Councils.

Council General prescribes the Superior Council.—The circumscription and location of Superior Councils are points which the first Article of this Rule assigns to the Council General. It is practice converted purely and simply into a written rule.

Its constitution.—The third Article treats of an important question, the constitution of Superior Council. After having well considered and weighed the different opinions expressed, it has been judged preferable to summon all the Conferences which the Superior Council is to unite to co-operate in its formation, in order thereby to make its authority greater. This co-operation may take place, either by means of delegates chosen in equal numbers by each Conference, or by means of correspondence, according to local circumstances; and it is sufficient for the validity of the constitution of the Council that all the Conferences should be summoned to take part in it; it is not necessary that they should actually have done so. If they neglect to reply to the summons, they are regarded as consenting parties. To establish greater order, the election should be directed by the Central Council; or, if there is no Central Council by the Particular Council established in the town where the Superior Council is to have its seat, or by the Conference of that town, if a Particular Council is not as yet in existence.

Election of the President of the Superior Council.—The 4th Article reproduces for the nomination of the President of the Superior Council, a mode analogous to that adopted for the nomination of the President General, and of which experience has shown the advantages. But the delay of two months is reduced to one month, as the circumscription is less extended.

The 8th Article provides for the case where there are in the same town a Superior Council and a Particular Council. In such a case it is decided that the Presidentship of the Particular Council belongs by right to the President of the Superior Council: but the latter may delegate it if he deem it necessary. This point has been already settled by the General Rule so far as concerns Paris, where both the Council General, the Central Council for the diocese and the Particular Council of the town assemble, and it has been sanctioned by experience. It has, then, appeared useful to extend it here to the cases in which multiplicity of affairs, or any other reason, would prevent, as in many towns, the function of the Particular Council being intrusted to the Superior Council.

Aggregation reserved to the Council General.—The 10th Article affirms the continued authority of the Council General, relative to the admission of Conferences into our Society. It is for the Council General to pronounce upon their aggregation, having, however, taken the advice of the Superior Council.

This mode, while preserving the common spirit, the unity which is indispensable, associates the Superior Councils in the development of our charitable family; it provides against the diversity of regulations, it consolidates our little and wholly brotherly plan of government, whilst preventing the admission, without due cause, of new Conferences coming to ask the rights of fellowship amongst us.

President of Superior Council may attend meetings of Council General.—These pleasant bonds of brotherhood and union are still more closely cemented by the 12th Article, which, by summoning the Presidents of Superior Councils into the bosom of the Council General, by giving them the right to take their places there, when they are at Paris, by suggesting that when they are

absent their advice upon grave questions be taken by correspondence, assures to the whole Society the assistance of their wisdom, their devotion, and their charity. The first trial, made by anticipation in connection with the drawing up of the present Rule, has already sufficiently proved its use in the eyes of the Council General.

Let us conclude by two observations:

1st. The Articles which are about to be perused form henceforth part of the General Rule; they have been inserted in it; but it has appeared preferable not to recast the body of the Rule itself, and not to alter the present well-established order of the Articles. To tamper with the Rule would have resulted in introducing grievous confusion, and in changing in some degree a venerated memorial of our Society, since it is almost contemporaneous with its foundation. Moreover, the authority of these new regulations will not, on this account, be any the less acceptable to our Conferences and to all our brothers.

2d. The present Rule is applicable to Councils now existing abroad whose mission it is to direct the Conferences belonging to different nations. But it is not, and it has not been, an obstacle to the formation of Councils of a more limited circumscription, which become, and are daily becoming, more necessary for binding closely together Conferences which are situated near one another. Far from this being the case, the Rule is for such Conferences a model and a basis for organization.

The following is the text of this Rule, adopted by the Council General at its meeting of April 1, 1850:

Text of the Rule for Superior Councils

ART. 1. When the Conferences of a more

extensive circumscription than that of a Particular Council desire to be united by a Council, a Superior Council may be constituted for this purpose, conformably to the terms of the Brief of our Holy Father, Pope Gregory XVI dated January 10, 1845. This Council takes its name from the circumscription for which it has been established, such circumscription being determined by the Council General.

Represents Council General Within Its Circumscription.—This Council, within its circumscription, is the representative of the Council General, the center of the whole Society, and it has the direction of all the Councils and Conferences already established, or which may be established there. It preserves the spirit and rule of the Society, it is the natural and ordinary channel of communication between Councils and Conferences and the Council General.

Constitution

ART. 2. The Superior Council consists of a President, one or more Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer, one or more Vice-Secretaries, a Vice-Treasurer, and several members.

Election of First President

ART. 3. When the President is to be ap-

pointed for the first time, all the Conferences of the circumscription are called together for the purpose. The election takes place under the charge of the Conference or Council established in the town where the Superior Council is to be set up.

Of Subsequent Presidents

ART. 4. When a new President is to be appointed, the Council is convened by the Vice-President. This meeting is preliminary and is devoted to arriving at an understanding as to the person who should be entrusted with this office. If the former President be still living, he is requested to designate the person whom he believes it desirable to elect.

When an understanding has been arrived at as to one or more names, the Council adjourns for a month. In the interval the proceedings of this preliminary meeting are made known to the Presidents of the Particular Councils, who consult their colleagues; and to the Presidents of the Conferences, who consult their Boards or even their Conferences. All the Presidents transmit their opinions to the Council, and according to these opinions the Council completes the election, an exact minute of which is recorded.

While the election is pending, all the mem-

bers of the circumscription offer up, either in private or at the meetings, a special prayer to God, namely, the *Veni Creator,* in order that the Holy Ghost may enlighten them in the choice they are about to make.

Members—How Appointed

ART. 5. The members of the Superior Council, as well as those of the Board are appointed by the President, with the advice of the Council.

Duties of the President

ART. 6. The President presides over the Superior Council, and over the General Meetings of the Conferences of the town where it is established. He summons special meetings. In case of absence, his place is taken by a Vice-President, or even, if necessary, by another member of the Council.

Secretary

ART. 7. The Secretary keeps a register of the name, occupation, address, residence, and date of reception of each member of the Conference,[1] belonging to the town where the Su-

1 At the time when the Rule was drawn up, some towns selected as the seat of a Superior Council did not possess more than one Conference and the Secretary of the Superior Council was at the same time Secretary of the Conference.

perior Council holds its sittings. He also keeps a record of the membership of the Boards of the Council or Conferences in the circumscription, as well as of the places, days, and hours of their meetings.

He prepares the minutes of the meetings of the Council and of General Meetings.

He is entrusted, under the direction of the President, with the general correspondence with the Presidents and Secretaries of the Councils and Conferences as well as with the Council General.

He has the custody of the records of the Society in the circumscription.

Treasurer.—The Treasurer keeps the accounts. He keeps a record of the receipts and disbursements and submits his accounts to the Council.

Where a Particular Council Exists, the Procedure

ART. 8. In case the Superior Council does not discharge the functions of a Particular Council for the Conferences of the town in which it is established, the presidency of the Particular Council devolves by right on the President of the Superior Council, who appoints the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of

the Conferences and Special Works and also the Board of Particular Council.

Should he find himself unable to discharge the duties of the office, the presidency of the Particular Council is supplied by a member of the Superior Council whom he delegates for that purpose.

How Funds Are Raised for Superior Council

ART. 9. The funds of the Council are maintained by extraordinary donations made to the Society within its circumscription, by collections at the General Meetings held in the town in which it is established, and by the contributions which are annually sent by each Conference or each Council of the circumscription, towards the general expenses.

Recommends Aggregation

ART. 10. When a Conference or Particular Council is formed in the circumscription, the Superior Council considers whether its aggregation should be recommended to the Council General.

This aggregation cannot be granted without a report from the Superior Council.

The Superior Council also reports to the Council General when there is a question of

dissolving a Conference or Council. In a case of urgency, it may provisionally suspend the meetings and refer the matter to the Council General.

Directs the Conferences

ART. 11. The Superior Council directs all the practical details of administration of the Conferences in its circumscription, either by correspondence or by directions from the President, and it watches over the observance of the Rule, consulting, however, the Council General upon grave questions, and such as may concern the welfare of the Society as a whole.

Presidents Attend Council General

ART. 12. The Presidents of Superior Councils, when in Paris, attend at and take part in the meetings of the Council General, of which they are members, as long as they hold office.

The Council General may ask for their opinion in writing upon questions which interest the whole Society.

RULES
OF THE
CENTRAL COUNCILS

It is important to point out clearly the differences that distinguish *Central* Councils from *Superior* Councils and *Particular* Councils.

What Is a Particular Council?

The *Particular* Council, as we have seen, is simply a delegation formed of representatives from the Conferences of the same town: a delegation upon which is conferred, by the very fact of its establishment, certain prerogatives of which the Conferences are deprived for its advantage. Of these prerogatives the most important is the nomination of the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Conferences. Be-

1 In applying the following Regulations to the case of a Central Council situated within the circumscription of a Superior Council, it will be necessary to read "Council General" as "Superior Council" in every place in which the term occurs throughout the Articles except in the sentence, "its seat and circumscription are fixed by the Council General," in the first paragraph of the first Article.

cause of the fact that the Conferences thus surrender a part of their autonomy, it will be seen that the action of a Particular Council ought not to extend too far. It could not, without inconvenience, go beyond the suburbs or outlying districts of a town.

If this is to be so, the Council General and the Superior Council, both located at the seat of Government of a State or of a large Province, will be too far removed from the Particular Councils or the isolated Conferences. Hence the necessity of intermediate machinery.

What Is a Central Council?

Thus Councils designed to facilitate the connection of the Particular Councils or the Conferences with the Council General and Superior Councils are established in large towns or circumscriptions rich in Conferences. These *Councils,* to which has been given the name of *Central,* have become the principal instruments for the establishment of new Conferences, while they at the same time devote their attention to the maintenance of our rules and of the spirit of the Society.

These Councils have gradually increased in number, and the Council General looks forward to the time when it will be possible to establish one in every diocese. It will be suf-

ficient for that purpose if there be three or four Conferences in the diocese.

In countries where there is no Superior Council, the *Central* Councils correspond with the Council General. Where a Superior Council exists, the Central Councils are placed under its jurisdiction.

Object of Central Councils

ART. 1. When it becomes advisable to unite by a Council the Conferences within a more extended circumscription than that of a Particular Council, there may be instituted for this purpose a Central Council, conformably to the terms of the Brief of our Holy Father, Pope Gregory XVI, dated January 10, 1845. This Council takes the name of the city in which it is established. Its seat and its circumscription are fixed by the Council General.

It represents, within its circumscription, the Council General, the center of the whole Society, and has the direction of all Councils or Conferences already established, or which may be established there. It preserves the spirit and rule of the Society; it is the natural and ordinary channel of communication between the Councils and Conferences, and the Council General.[2]

2 See footnote, p. 217.

Approval of the Bishop necessary.—This Article presents several points for comment:

1st. Central Councils are instituted by the Council General, which fixes their circumscription after having taken the advice of the Conferences that are to be embraced within it, as expressed in the applications for institution of the Councils: but, at the same time, it is an invariable Rule never to institute a Central Council until the Bishop of the diocese has approved and directly authorized the measure. In the preliminary observations on the constitution of the Society, it is laid down that "we will never undertake anything new or important, within any ecclesiastical jurisdiction, without first asking the advice of the Ordinary." In so important a step we surely could not be unfaithful to this fundamental principle of our Conferences.

Boundaries may be altered.—2d. The geographical boundary of these Councils may be changed by the Council General; but the same formalities are to be observed as those followed in instituting them.

Lastly. It is to be remarked that if the Central Council is the natural and usual channel of correspondence between Councils and Conferences, and the Council General, it by no means follows that the direct correspondence of Conferences with the Council General ought to be abandoned. This correspondence has formed a connection too pleasant to be broken, or even enfeebled. New communications may be opened between neighboring branches; but those which exist should not be suppressed.

Constitution

ART. 2. The Central Council is composed of a President, one or more Vice-Presidents, a

Secretary, a Treasurer, one or more Assistant Secretaries, an Assistant Treasurer, the Presidents of the Particular Councils within its circumscription, and of other members chosen from among the Presidents or members of the Conferences of the city where it is located, or within its jurisdiction.

Article 2 modifies the former usage, with respect to members of Central Councils. Heretofore, the Presidents of all the Conferences within the circumscription were members of the Central Council.

That plan, although useful in the infancy of the Society, became soon almost impracticable from the multiplication of Conferences: for the Presidents of the distant Councils, and especially those of rural Conferences, being very numerous, could not frequently leave home; hence the meetings of the Council were soon reduced to two or three annually. In this state of things the Central Councils became rather nominal than real institutions: and although their numbers were large on paper, their natural efficiency was limited to two or three yearly sittings, at which none save their own Board attended.

Membership of Council.—And yet it is the duty of such Councils to busy themselves about the interests of their Conferences throughout the whole year; there are aggregations to be prepared, advice to be given in cases laid before them by the Conferences, dangers to be indicated, and examples worthy of imitation to be pointed out. It is necessary, therefore, that at their sittings there should be a full attendance of members, so that from their numbers a moral weight may be given to their proceedings and to their decisions. It is for this reason that Article 2, in addition to the

Boards, creates several Councilors, who may be selected either from the city where the Council sits, or from other points within its circumscription. Moreover, the Presidents of Particular Councils are members by right. These latter Councils are now established, not only in cities, but even in the country, in order to bind together adjacent Conferences; as, for instance, those of a county or several neighboring parishes. As it devolves upon them to give life and activity to those Conferences, naturally feeble both in resources and numbers, they are of real importance; and it behooves the Presidents of those Conferences to be present at the sittings of the Central Council that they may represent their Conferences.

The holding of the General Meetings of the circumscription, said the Council General more than half a century ago, when laying down the Rules for the formation of Central Councils, is in no way hindered by the organization of the Central Councils. On the contrary, such meetings will be much better organized when a Central Council has the directing of them. Such assemblies can be preceded by a special meeting of the Presidents or delegates, in which improvements can be mutually suggested, advice asked or given, and the details of what is done in each Conference communicated; and although such meetings may be informal, and not be intended to give formal decisions, they will not, on that account, be the less intimate and cordial, the less useful or effective in drawing closer the relations of brotherhood. Experience has proved this, and meetings of this kind have gradually assumed more and more importance. In order that Diocesan General Meetings, as well as District Meetings in which the Conferences of more than one diocese would take part, might become more general, the Sovereign Pontiffs have granted special Indulgences

to all members, both active and honorary, who assist at such meetings.

Members usually selected from city where Council meets.—The members of the Council—other than those who form the Board, and the Presidents of Particular Councils—will, in practice, be selected in the city where the Central Council sits; but they also may be chosen from other Conferences of the circumscription. Members, in fact, should not form part of the Council simply to give advice, but to take an active part in its proceedings; and one of the most useful services they can render would be, first of all, to visit neighboring Conferences—those which are being organized, with the view of infusing into them the spirit of brotherhood and friendly acquaintance and afterwards to visit the older established Conferences.

Appointment of First President

ART. 3. When, for the first time, a President is to be appointed, the nomination is made by the Council General.[3]

This Article is the application of a usage, existing since the first organization of Central Councils. In fact, when, for the first time a President is to be chosen, the Conferences not having had any relations with one another, any advice on the choice of a President of the Central Council would be impossible from the want of sufficient information on the part of the greater number.

Subsequent Presidents

ART. 4. When a new President is to be appointed the Council is convened by the Vice-

[3] See footnote, p. 217.

President. This meeting is preliminary and is devoted to arriving at an understanding as to the person who should be entrusted with this office. If the former President be still living, he is requested to designate the person, whom he believes it desirable to elect.

Procedure to be followed.—When an understanding has been arrived at as to one or more names, the Council transmits the minutes of this first meeting to the Council General,[4] which expresses its opinion upon the proposed appointment. After receiving this opinion the Council adjourns for a month, and the names agreed upon are, in the interval, made known to the Presidents of the Particular Councils within the circumscription, who consult their colleagues; and to the Presidents of Conferences, who consult their Boards, and even their Conferences. All the Presidents transmit their opinions to the Central Council, and according to these opinions the Council completes the election, an exact minute of which is recorded.

While the election is pending, all the members of the circumscription offer up, either in private or at the meetings, a special prayer to God, namely, the *Veni Creator,* in order that the Holy Ghost may enlighten them in the choice they are about to make.

The mode of election pointed out above is very nearly a reproduction of the Rule followed in selecting the President General, and the Presidents of Superior Councils. The Central Council prepares the election: then consults the Conferences and Particular Councils; and finally, after being enlightened by their advice, proceeds to an election. The only point of difference is, that the Council General is consulted on the

[4] See footnote, p. 217.

election that is to take place. When the Central Council is established within the jurisdiction of a Superior Council, it is this last Council and not the Council General that ought to be consulted upon the election of the President of the Central Council.

Who Are Members

ART. 5. Excepting the Presidents of Particular Councils who are members in their own right the members of the Central Council, as well as the officers constituting the Board, are appointed by the President, with the advice of the Council.

Duties of President

ART. 6. The President presides over the Central Council, and also over the general meetings of the Conferences of the town where it is established. To him, also, belongs the right to preside at the general meetings of the whole circumscription. He summons special meetings. In case of absence his place is taken by a Vice-President, and even, if necessary, by another member of the Council.

ART. 7. In case the Central Council does not discharge the functions of a Particular Council for the Conferences of the town where it is established, the presidency of the Partic-

ular Council devolves by right on the President of the Central Council, who appoints the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Conferences and Special Works, and also the Board of the Particular Council.

In case of any impediment the presidency of the Particular Council is supplied by a member of the Central Council whom he delegates for that purpose.

Central and Particular Councils distinct. President of Central Council has not the right to nominate Presidents of Conferences.—It might be inferred from the first Clause of this Article that the union of the two Councils, Central and Particular, should be the rule, and their separate existence the exception. The Council General does not admit this interpretation, which long experience compels it to reject. According to the Rule, the two Councils must be separate and distinct, having regard to their different constitutions and to their different functions. So convinced is the Council General of the necessity for having the two Councils separate that they strongly urge that, wherever possible, the President of the Central Council should delegate a member of that Council to take his place as President of the Particular Council. It should be added, however, that if, according to Article 31 of the Rule, the President of the Particular Council has the right to nominate the Presidents of the Conferences depending on that Particular Council, the President of the Central Council has not the same right, and his office does not give him the same prerogative over the Conferences which depend only on the Central Council. According to the common right, those Conferences are left free as to the choice of their own President.

Funds

ART. 8. The funds of the Council are maintained by extraordinary donations made to it, by collections at the general meetings held in the circumscription, and by the contributions which are annually sent by each Conference or each Council within the circumscription, towards the general expenses.

ART. 9. When a Conference or a Particular Council is formed in the circumscription, the Central Council considers whether its aggregation should be recommended to the Council General.[5] This aggregation cannot be granted without the approval of the Central Council.

Council recommends aggregation of Conference. Monthly meetings.—The Council also reports to the Council General,[6] when there is a question of dissolving or suspending, a Conference or Council.

These last two Articles explain themselves. It would be superfluous to insist upon, as it would be useless to insert in the Regulations details on the composition of the Board and the duties of the various officers: nor has an essential point—for it follows as a matter of course—been mentioned, that the meetings of these Councils, like those of all others, should, as with Conferences, begin and end by prayer. Nor have any recurring dates for the sittings been prescribed, as they depend much upon circumstances; but they should be held, if possible, monthly, in order that, on the one

5 See footnote, p. 217. 6 See footnote, p. 217.

hand, the whole Council may better know what is happening within the circumscription; and, on the other, that the various questions which arise may not be left too long undecided. It was chiefly in the hope of inducing the more frequent sitting of Central Councils, that their composition has been modified.

Such is this Rule in its entirety. It approaches closely to that of the Superior Councils, and does not really differ from the latter except in the mode of nomination of the Presidents and the members who compose it. It seeks, above all, to ensure that these Councils should be local centers of practical good. May these rules tend to the good direction of the Conferences and contribute to the fostering among them of the spirit of charity, simplicity, and zeal, which will always be their principal strength. This is the most cherished wish of the Council General.

[7]As the regulations for Superior and Central Councils seem to conflict one with the other in defining the jurisdiction and duties of the said Councils, the matter was brought under the notice of the Council General, and in reply, the President General has written as follows: "Wherever Superior Councils are established they represent the Council General, the other Councils, Central or Particular, are placed under their authority. Thus, in Belgium, the Central Councils of Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Liége, etc., are placed under the direction of the Superior Council of Belgium. In France, the Central Councils depend directly on the Council General; but this arises solely from the circumstance that there is no Superior Council, as the Council General exercises the functions of such a Council. The member who drew up the Rule concerning Central Councils had this state of things only in

[7] See letter of President General of May 15, 1888, in the *Bulletin* of September, 1888.

view; it is for that reason that he has not spoken of the subordination of Central to Superior Councils; but as within their circumscriptions the Superior Councils represent the Council General, it is self-evident that they have authority over the Central Councils. Thus, at the establishment of a Central Council, its President is chosen by the Superior Council; the Council General intervenes only to fix its circumscription and to give it the institution from which flows the right to the Indulgences.

"You ask us if a Central Council has the right to communicate directly with the Council General. We answer: Yes. Every member of the Society, every Conference, every Council, whether Central or Particular, is entitled to write to the Council General; but the Council General has made it a rule for itself to send to the Superior Councils for their opinion, everything which has not been transmitted through them.

"Accordingly, the Central Councils as well as the Particular Councils, must address themselves to the Superior Councils for all that concerns the interests of the Society. In most cases the Superior Council will decide without consulting the Council General. If the Council General is called upon to pronounce, it will be for the Superior Council to consult it, and it is to the Superior Council that the Council General will give its answer."

The above was copied from the *Bulletin,* September, 1888, pages 292 and 293.

By following these rules, which down to the present moment were mere customs, the young Christian associates of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, have hitherto endeavored to attain the double end:

Of learning to know and love each other.

Of learning to know, love and serve the poor of Jesus Christ.

The establishment of separate Conferences has not proved an obstacle to the accomplishment of this double end: Christian intimacy has grown even stronger between the members of the same section than was possible between the members of the whole Society. There is no solitude like that of a crowd, and large assemblies are very like the multitude we see passing and bustling along, but which excites no interest in our breast, nor feels any for us. Besides, from time to time we correspond with distant Conferences. Those belonging to the same town meet together; and such meetings and letters make our ties the stronger. Neither is distance nor any other obstacle insurmountable for friendship, grounded upon community of prayer and charitable deeds.

Be of good courage, therefore; whether together or separate, far or near, let us love each other, let us love and serve the poor. Let us love that little Society which made us known to one another, which placed us in the path of a more Christian and charitable life. Let us love our customs, our rules: by adhering strictly to them, we shall be most certainly kept in the true path, as they will keep up our work. "A

great deal of evil is done," said a holy priest to another charitable association; "let us do a little good." Oh! how delightful it will be one day to find that we have not allowed the days of our youth to glide away uselessly! Youth is a field that requires a reaper. Let us not run through it in haste, and without regard to futurity; let us look around us, let us carefully glean every one of the ears that lie at our feet; let us do a little good, for that good is a sheaf of provision for life; that good will be fruitful for us in the eyes of the Lord.

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